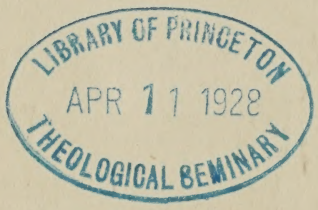
CHAOS AND A CREED



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Chaos and a creed

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Chaos and a Creed

BY JAMES PRICEMAN [pseud]

Winifred Margaretta Kirkland

NEW YORK AND LONDON
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CHAOS AND A CREED

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First Edition
A-Z

To
the friend
who made possible
the writing of
this book

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To the Reader

EVERY reader of this book has the right to know my reasons for employing a pseudonym. The convictions stated in these pages are the outcome of experience so profound and so bewildering that no lip creed could have met it. For my path there was no choice but to test, step by step, my own faith, but if, while I was thus struggling to establish the foundations of my belief, I had known that this volume would appear over my own signature, I could not have written it so frankly. The modern world cries out for mysticism, but too often denies to mysticism the very conditions that permit its existence. The first requisite for any book that tries to express a vital personal religion is solitude—the solitude of anonymity quite as much as the actual mountain solitude in which this confession of faith was written.

"James Priceman" is, however, more than a

pseudonym. It was only by means of the thin veil of an imaginary personality that I could secure the detachment necessary for a clear presentation of my convictions. More and more, as each chapter developed, the pen-name came to signify for me merely a typical Everyman, seeking his way through a world of mystery and challenge. My profoundest wish for this book is that "James Priceman" may be utterly forgotten in the portrait he has humbly tried to paint.

Spring, 1925

THE AUTHOR

Chaos and a Creed

Chapter I: The Reason for this Book

THE chief motive of this book is clarification of my own creed. In an age of spiritual isolation, an age without leaders in statesmanship, or philosophy, or art, or religion, no man among us can trust any other man to do his thinking for him. In the immense ferment of the present, when men and women are yeasty with unaccustomed and often unwelcome leaven, every man who tries to make reckoning with himself of his own opinions is, in his own small degree, serving his generation. If, having found for himself a few conclusions, he can then make these articulate for others, he stands as one passing speaker on that great forum of the printed page, where, above all in our thought processes, we each need what small illumination we can offer one another.

Each one of us is to-day forced to a voyage

of lonely discovery, for which past history is as challenging to the honest explorer as the present and the future, for no era, not even our own, is ever so unprecedented as it thinks itself. All we can say to one another is, Here or here or here after stormy sailing I found a haven, but it is impossible to say whether for another man it will offer the same assurance of safety. Much of what I to-day set forth may be changed by the new issues of to-morrow, for I am merely trying to take stock of what I find to be my own working creed—the creed not of a theologian, nor of a philosopher, but of a plain man speaking to other plain men and women. We are each of us, I believe, continually puzzled by impulses and actions which we know to rise from that obscure region of our being vaguely labeled spiritual. While we always hesitate to investigate this region, each man for himself, we are always a little restless and uneasy until we have done so. In my own humble exploration of my own faith, I must mark some spots as still dark with enigma, but to define these dim places as sharply as the clearer ones, will help, for no man gets very far

in any direction until he has forced his doubts to be as valiant as his convictions.

There is another motive in my writing this book. It is often easier to speak to one's friends in print than in conversation. My life has lain for the most part among intellectual people, active, questing men and women. Very few of these friends of mine share my point of view, and in ordinary talk I find it impossible to explain my attitude. No matter how sympathetically we may discuss some living issue, always the logic of the others in its ultimate reference harks back to their fundamental premise that this world is a tremendous accident, while my logic rests on the opposite premise, that this world has a transcendent plan. Incessantly this demarcation is perceived by both sides with a distressing mutual puzzlement and silence. Many a man in this same predicament, that of an obstinate belief in an unseen personal agency directing all our affairs, must share with me the long suppressed impulse to speak out once for all his answer to the agnosticism and the cynicism implicit in half the people he meets and in nine-

tenths of the volumes he reads. In this book I would make clear to my friends, as well as to myself, the reasons for my faith, asking them to believe that I have come to it by processes as sincere as those by which they have arrived at an equally honest agnosticism. One thing will always seem strange to me, that belief in God should so often be regarded as the easy refuge of the simple-minded, and disbelief be thought the special prerogative of people who think for themselves. For myself, I have never met in any person, nor in any printed word, the agnosticism and the cynicism that I have combated within myself, and yet the arguments for a God back of this universe seem to me forever greater than the arguments against him.

This is a period of live thinking. One has only to compare the magazines of to-day with those of ten years ago to see that more people are able to write well than ever before in our history, and that more people are able to read and ponder what is being written. The hours just before dawn are always a time shaken both by hope and by fear, a time when portentous forces are surmised in the darkness. It

is an arresting fact that a book like Papini's *Life of Christ* should to-day be a best seller. In view of that fact writers who lightly dismiss religion as an exhausted force are like men shouting against the roaring of a freshet, the news that March snows can no longer melt nor rivers swell. It is a day of splendid testing of the individual, just because it is a day without subjection to any form of authority. Nothing is stronger proof of the weakness of each than the hysterical insistence of government, law, religion, and science, that each still possesses its obsolete authority, and the refusal of each humbly to incorporate into its decadence that vitalizing principle which shall give to each a new authority. That which is accepted never needs argument. The absence of accepted leadership leaves each man free to follow the far-discerned gleam of a leadership, not dead, but incessantly resurgent.

Chapter II: The Manner of Approach

The Present Confusion of Thought

If one could make a cross section of American thought to-day, cutting straight down from top to bottom of social and intellectual strata, one would find the utmost variety of opinion, and yet at the same time one would discover within each stratum a most energetic sifting of its own opinions. Many of our thinkers are invalidating religion at the same moment that great groups of people are engaged in such fiery controversy as never before occurred in our annals. People fight over religion only when it is very much alive. Everywhere all classes are thinking and questioning. While many Christians are defending their ancient strongholds with a heat that betrays far too much hatred to be convincing of

spiritual healthiness, braver churchmen are examining church institutions and creeds and Scripture with scientific candor. The chief intellectual leaders of the day have elevated Freudianism, which should be a science and a means, into a philosophy and an end, and have then accepted it with a finality a little surprising since, in a universe that Freudianism itself postulates as evolutional, no philosophy could be final.

Of the great mass of people, always reluctant to do its own thinking, but forced to it nowadays by the sheer discomfort of existing institutions as at present these function, the majority accepts the views of the churches with both the confidence and the inflammability with which the Jews of long ago took the teachings of their scribes. On the other hand, a smaller number of the so-called masses receive the agnosticism of science and the philosophy of Freudianism quite as uncritically as the average Christian welcomes clerical guidance. One wonders if the intellectuals reckon fully with the effect of their tenets, as these sift down to less educated minds and affect the daily con-

duct of crude men unrestrained by any personal idealism. It did not prove a good thing for national survival that Greece expected its learned men to drop the gods, and its less learned men to keep them.

Yet through all the varying kinds and quantities of religion and of irreligion to be observed in American thought to-day, it is everywhere evident that each man's faith or no-faith is to him a vital issue. Any one of us may be mistaken, but not one of us is sleepy. The rising tide against materialism is pushing everywhere. We have become accustomed to it, or we should be startled to see religion appearing nakedly in places where its mention two decades ago would have been indecorous, in newspaper editorials, in magazine articles, in chambers of commerce, in conventions of lawyers. But it is religion with a difference. We may look on while fundamentalists and modernists wrangle, glad of this witness to spiritual vitality, but curiously aware all the while of another observer standing apart in ironic silence while the meaning of his death is argued in maddened words. Somehow thinking men and women

to-day are not so much concerned with why Jesus died as with why he is still alive. It is easy enough for rationalism to argue down the creed called Christian, for too much ugliness has been committed in its name, but the man called Christ is not so easily disposed of. There is even a hint of comicality in efforts to preach a new social order and at the same time not to plagiarize rather extensively from the Sermon on the Mount. The most determinedly atheistic of the younger novelists of to-day cannot prevent their heroes from crying out, "Christ!" in moments of stress.

Back of every man's creed to-day, if he gives it honest investigation, back of every man's creed, equally whether he is agnostic or whether he is believing, stands that silent, challenging figure, Jesus. Whatever philosophy you hold, you must either explain Jesus or explain him away.

The Guidance of Rationalism

Among the many opposing currents of opinion to-day, it is hard enough for any man to formulate his own course. A choice of guides

is difficult, for among believing people there appears to be more fighting than thinking, and among agnostics too much easy scorn, and everywhere too little of that austere adventure of the unseen which is faith. Obviously the first thing to do in investigating one's own belief is to go straight to the gospel records and read them as if one had never read them before. Everybody owes Jesus that amount of honest attention. The four gospels have sealed him within a repository as secure as the tombs of the Pharaohs. In seeking to penetrate this repository, one may follow the manner of approach either of the rationalists or of the theologians, but for myself, a plain man groping for that which to him is truth, I cannot fully accept the guidance of either. As I seek not controversy with anyone, but merely clarity for myself, I cannot follow the authority of rationalist science because, while the fact of evolution seems to me too obvious for question, I cannot unqualifiedly subscribe to the ape-and-accident theory. It accounts for human cruelty; it does not account for human kindness. It accounts for ugliness; it does not ac-

count for beauty. It explains sensuality; it does not explain aspiration. To attribute a belief in God solely to the sublimation of the animal instinct of self-preservation is an assumption that for my own intellect is far too facile and too glib. To explain how the idea of God came to exist in the mind of man is not to explain how the idea of man came to exist in the mind of God, and for myself it is impossible to look at the course of evolution and not to believe there was an idea and a mind back of it. To say that creation has taken millions of years does not annul a creator, but establishes him. To assert that the long history of humanity from nothingness to sublimity is only one long-continued chapter of accidents is beyond the farthest reach of my credulity. The existence of a mind in the making in no way contradicts for me, nor yet does it elucidate, the far more puzzling fact of a soul in the making.

It is the dogmatism of rationalists that makes me distrust them. When they are not cocksure I welcome the many-sided illumination they offer for the bewildering path of

faith. I cannot respect any man who thinks he has ascertained the final solution of the universe, but I do respect H. G. Wells because he always expects to discover something new to-morrow. A further reason that makes me discredit the rationalists is that they appear to bury themselves in investigations of prehistoric or of protoplasmic man, and entirely to ignore certain staggering facts about the men immediately under their eyes. In this connection, another man I respect is Vernon Kellogg, who closes a keenly argued biological discussion by frankly admitting that he cannot explain on any purely protoplasmic basis the loveliness of his wife and little girl.

For myself, it has become a primary law of all my thinking never to trust as a guide any man who sneers. Surely, in the face of so marvelous a universe, scorn is an essentially unscientific bias of mind. Now while throughout this book I use the word faith as meaning faith in God, the word itself has, of course, a wider connotation. Faith, taken in its broadest sense, means any belief in the unproved so strong that a man will act on it—a conviction strong

enough, for example, to make Columbus attempt the untried ocean, and the Wright brothers attempt the untried air. As I look back on the slow emergence of humanity from out the primordial ooze, it seems to me that faith, in its broadest sense of adventuring the unknown, has always been the supreme force for advance, and scorn of such faith always the greatest deterrent to progress. The first amœba to start an era of differentiation, and the first ape to start an era of walking upright, were brave individual adventurers pitted against the inertia of their fellows. Gazing back into farthest history, I cannot see that any men have advanced the race except those who acknowledged the possibilities of the unproved and were ready to die for an hypothesis. The scorn, therefore, of any scientist for the churchman, of any churchman for the scientist, invalidates both equally as authorities, for it reveals too easy a complacence, and complacence, as we all know, is a betrayal of cowardice, a manifestation of the inferiority complex. Complacence is always the refuge of those who would rather remain snug and shrunken than

adventure the intrepidity of growth. Revealed religion is a term occasioning much agitation, for the churchman fears a loss of personal prestige if he accepts religion as revealed to H. G. Wells, and the scientist fears a loss of personal prestige if he accepts religion as revealed to Simon Peter. For myself, seeking among contemporary thinkers some help in investigating the accounts of Jesus, I cannot trust any man who is not himself fearlessly humble.

As I read current rationalist discussion of religious matters, I am often surprised at the actual ignorance and inaccuracy sometimes betrayed. It appears sometimes as if the men who most despise the four tiny narratives of Jesus's life, had never read them. They have read about them, they have heard about them, but one questions whether they have ever actually sat down to read them for themselves without prejudice. Men who would be ashamed not to bring an open mind to the reading of Sophocles or of Horace, scorn to bring an open mind to the reading of Mark or Luke. In discussing the four evangels, critics are too often

guilty of inaccuracy, occasionally almost of illiteracy.

An historian would be modest in his allusions to biology, a surgeon would be modest in his allusions to archæology, but few rationalists, whatever their own line of work, hesitate to exhibit their ignorance of the Bible or of biblical research. Now if some eminent electrician set out to write a book about Euripides, I should be interested in him not as an authority, but as a dilettante. If said electrician had capacities of imagination and of fresh sympathy, I would hear him gladly, whether or not his opinions coincided with my own, but I certainly would not regard him as an authority on either textual criticism or Athenian history. For those I should turn to accredited specialists. As I read rationalist scientists or historians or philosophers to-day, they do not seem to me to exhibit enough first-hand knowledge of the gospel narrative to make them competent to dismiss it so summarily as they do. I would gladly listen to whatever any scientist had to say of his personal response either to Euripides or to Jesus, but I could not possibly

believe that his equipment for the study of either could be exhaustive.

The Guidance of the Church

One turns from the guidance of the thinking men who do not accept Jesus to the guidance of the thinking men who do, but there are difficulties here also for any complete acquiescence. One is struck at once by an arresting fact—the theologians of to-day show a great deal more knowledge of what science is doing and thinking than the scientists show of what theology is doing and thinking. I must make it clear that I am speaking not of fanatics, but of those illustrious Christian thinkers whom friends and foes alike would describe as gentlemen and scholars. It is a humorous evidence of a topsy-turvy period that to-day religious fanatics should be attacking science as science was in 1870, and at the same time scientists should be attacking religion as religion was in 1870. But since 1870 the most thoughtful men in the laboratory and the most thoughtful men in the pulpit have done a good deal of growing. As a mere everyday layman, trying simply to

be an honest and independent observer and reader, I have been forced to the conclusion that the exhaustive learning and brilliant logic of such men as Abbott, Wade, and Inge is practically unknown to the glib-worded rationalists now prominent as historians, psychologists, and philosophers, while, on the other hand, the most eminent churchmen show by a hundred explicit and implicit allusions their complete familiarity with the secular literature, the social movements, and the scientific discoveries of their time. I cannot help feeling that such a man as Dean Inge, as an observer of the universe has within him an immensely greater intellectual content of varied knowledge, and an immensely keener intellectual acumen in making his deductions from that knowledge than any rationalist I have met. In briefer words, he seems to me to know more and to think about it harder than any materialist I have read. And yet Dean Inge is a Christian. Can anyone read such a book as Wade's *New Testament History,* and not realize that here is a man putting every resource of brain and scholarship to the elucidation of some tiniest

preposition as being matter perhaps momentous for textual reading? Science itself gave him his unimpeachably fearless method, and shall science show itself blandly ignorant of his results? I cannot dismiss the austere intensive reasoning of such men as Inge or Wade for what is to me the more superficial logic of pure materialism. After all, in the bottom of our hearts, is there not always more dignity attaching to the man who says, "I believe in God," than to the man who says, "I believe in matter"? This is because the first man is the more audacious, and, of all human attributes, audacity has the deepest and the most enduring effect on observers. It is precisely because of his audacity that Jesus still survives as a living enigma for every honest man to answer.

In my approach to the brief biblical account of Jesus's career, I find myself forced frankly to reject many of the human discrepancies and superstitions of the church, and yet its guidance seems to me safer than that of pure rationalism, and this because the church seems to me truer to the principle governing all our evolution, for, with all its inconsistencies, the church

stands unalterably for the unproved as against the proved, the invisible as against the visible, the spiritual as against the material. It is easy enough for anyone to believe in what he can see and handle and eat and buy, but it requires a far higher mental development to be motivated by that which one cannot see or handle or eat or buy. Evolution is a long incline up from protoplasm toward personality, and because I believe that all our development has depended on attempting the unproved, I believe that the church is a better guide for one seeking to formulate a science of living, than rationalism, which proves too much.

It is a sad fact, however, that the churches also often prove too much. It is impossible for me to believe more than Jesus himself asks me to believe. But the churches go far beyond the demands of Jesus in creed, although they stop far short of his demands in conduct. The theologian insists on reading into the gospels the doctrines that have grown out of them, while a present-day thinker desires to go to that first record with an impartial mind, fearless to discover what may be there, and equally fearless

to discard what may not be there. The institutions and creeds of the churches in trying to transmit Jesus to us have mingled with the life that was in him much of the death and decay always inherent in all ecclesiasticism. Without the church we should never have known Jesus, but within the churches do we always know him? A present-day reader of the Bible does not wish to be previously instructed to look for predestination or transubstantiation, or any other article of any creed. He wishes to enter the gate of the gospels as he might have entered any gate of old Jerusalem, without direction from priest or scribe, in order to observe for himself this street preacher from Galilee. The impulse of the thinking Christian to-day is that of Nicodemus, to slip out and away from his church and listen for himself to words that may give him not so much a creed, as a Christ.

One reason why I cannot completely accept the teaching of the church in regard to written Scripture, is the failure of the church to read the great unwritten scripture always open and always arresting, those twin books of the out-

of-doors and of everyday humanity. Biblical scholarship in its study of the history of Jesus neglects too much the facts of human character and psychology, data scientifically as important for all creed-making as is textual criticism. There is still in the church too much the attitude of the cloister, too little the attitude of the crowd. In its elucidation of the Bible there is still in theology too much midnight treatise, too little sunshine. If the churches would only admit that the sky is bigger than they are, that the commonest men and women along our daily routine are often as inspiring as any duly accredited preacher! I could listen more to the churchmen if they listened more to winds and sea and the great surge of humanity. Yet Jesus loved out-of-doors as heartily as any pagan, and Jesus loved to chat with any dirty, crafty Oriental beggar crouched like a spider in the parched grass at the edge of the highway. As I stand and look at all the churches and all the creeds of Christendom, it is impossible for me ever to forget that Jesus was an excommunicated man. He tried to stay in his church, but was forced out of it because

it cramped him. Jesus was greater than the temple and said so. In fact, it was for precisely this blasphemy that he was executed. Unimpeachably conservative in all essential matters of example, he is described as going on every Sabbath to the synagogue, but how can anyone ever forget how many times he went to the mountains to pray?

The Attitude of a Thinking Christian

The man who is impelled to make his own creed is also impelled to make it fit all the data spread before his vision, not alone the data to which the rationalists confine themselves, and not alone the data to which the religious confine themselves. In his approach to Scripture the thinking Christian must have a faith fundamental enough to draw its deductions not only from certain material as once expressed in four brief Greek manuscripts, but also from that same material as for two thousand years it has affected human character. Through twenty centuries he must study the effect of Jesus not only on the men who have accepted him, but also on the men who have rejected him. The

thinking Christian must face eye to eye not alone the Jesus of yesterday, but the Jesus of to-day before he can win for himself from chaos a creed that will hold for to-morrow.

As a guide, science is fallible because it refuses to interpret the secular in terms of the sacred, and the church is fallible because, too often, it refuses to interpret the sacred in terms of the secular. The distinction between the sacred and the secular is one that Jesus never recognized, any more than he ever recognized the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. For him the Sabbath was no holier than any other day, and every other day was just as holy as the Sabbath. For him the lilies rising from the dead every springtime at a mysterious summons, were neither more nor less miraculous than the rising from the dead of Lazarus at a mysterious summons. For myself it is exactly as much a strain on credulity, or just as much a test of faith, to account for the Scripture of the lilies as to account for the Scripture of Lazarus. In both any honest man must observe an astounding control of death by life, and explanations of this life prin-

ciple by reference solely to chemistry or biology do not satisfy me any more than they would have satisfied Cleopas in his bewilderment and doubt before the events of the first Easter. For me, whether I am studying the Greek of the gospels or whether I am studying the colors of the woods, every word of the Bible is just as much and just as little inspired as every leaf on every tree. If I am able to face and to accept all that is implied by the word April, I am able to face and to accept all that is implied by the word resurrection. Yet for me, as for Cleopas, the sole ultimate clue to all Scripture, whether living or written, is the personality of Jesus.

Chapter III: The Historic Background

Jesus's Background As a Clue to His Survival

As I approach the actual reading of Jesus's life, I must once again reiterate my standpoint. I write as a layman and an amateur. I may at any moment be guilty of as great inaccuracy as any of the skeptic writers with whom I have just found fault. My knowledge of the actual present findings of biblical scholarship corresponds to just such knowledge of electricity, plumbing, lumber, construction, architecture, as I should feel it necessary to have if I were about to put up a house. In order that my investment should be safe I should need some information as regards each of the sciences that contribute to the science of building, but if I stopped to make my knowledge

exhaustive, my home would go unbuilt. It will be perfectly possible for any specialist to find fault with any statement I may make with reference to the many subjects that contribute to a study of the four gospels, for as to the architecture of my belief, I am frankly ignorant in many a line of research that life allows me no time to follow. In a brief survey of the historical conditions that produced Jesus I here confine myself only to those that have helped to make my faith. It is not Jesus's surroundings that have interested me, but rather his manner of handling them, as offering a clue to his enigmatic survival among us. I have not gone to the gospels for controversy; I have gone to them to get a creed I could live and die in.

Every man who believes Jesus to be still a living force in the world must see the Jesus of history from a different angle. Every man among us who can make his own angle of observation clear, first to himself and then to others, contributes something to a portrait too complex for any one man ever to pronounce complete. One of the strange things in the narratives of the Resurrection is that everyone saw

a different Jesus, one a gardener, another a fisherman, another a traveler. It is easy enough for anyone to seal Jesus into a grave, but every one of us who can report to-day, "This is the Jesus I have seen," helps in the harder task of rolling away a stone. My accounting for my faith is only a way of saying, "This is the Jesus of history as I see him."

Its Elements of Death

If one is going to give Jesus as much of respectful attention as one would give, say, to Napoleon, one must study his time and place before one studies the man. To understand the career of Napoleon, the Corsican, one would have to know something of the French history that preceded him and of the French country where he played his part. The parallelism between Jesus and Napoleon is not without suggestiveness, for it was just as difficult for a Galilean to make himself felt in the Jerusalem of A.D. 30 as for a Corsican to make himself felt in the Paris of 1798. For their own time and people Corsica and Galilee were places too uncouth and illiterate for anything but laugh-

ter. If Jesus of Galilee had actually chosen to enter the world under the heaviest obstacles to leadership that any man could have, he could not have found a more obscure country, a more disparaged region, a more derided village, a more humble family than those which were actually his. It was a sublime acceptance of handicap for any man to rise from such antecedents to the influence that Jesus has had upon history. If the Pope in the Vatican were informed to-day that there was at this moment in a Zulu hut in Africa a baby destined to recreate religion, he could not be more astounded than Augustus in his imperial palace would have been if he had been informed that there was at that very moment running about the streets of a tiny hill town in Galilee a little Hebrew boy whose name would become familiar to thousands ignorant of even the existence of Cæsar.

If Jesus had actually chosen his date of entrance, he could not have chosen one when, in all history, his own proud nation was so hopelessly downtrodden. The Romans held a fiery race in as tight a grip as the Germans once

held Belgium, only their grip was permanent, so that for the Jews craft and compromise were the only method of dealing. The Romans despised religion too much to interfere with it, except when fanatics threatened an insurrection. The Jews were permitted the semblance of kings, but these were of alien race, and all true Jews hated the Herods, those sycophants of the foreign governors. Jesus was a live man and a live patriot born into a dead nation. Leadership without shedding blood was a staggering feat to accomplish.

If Jesus had actually selected those circumstances when of all times and places it would have been hardest for any vital faith to make headway, he could not have found a more unpromising spot than the Jerusalem of the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees. Strange that history, in spite of all its power to bury living truth, should have been able to falsify Jesus into the semblance of a meek man, when much of his teaching was shouted in the teeth of a mob brandishing stones and howling for his life! Abnormally restricted as was the Jewish nation, all its normal national expression,

literary, artistic, political, legal, turned into its church as the sole outlet permitted to its energies, so that not in all history can there be discovered a time when a purely spiritual religion had become so incrusted with materialism. The concise and simple law of Moses had become swollen beyond recognition by a great body of rabbinical addenda and casuistry, orally transmitted. From northernmost Galilee to southernmost Judea there were everywhere synagogue schools, so that no Jewish boy was an illiterate; but these schools stultified young minds by the rote learning of laws made by generation after generation of lawmakers. Many laws necessitated, exactly as in the United States to-day, many lawyers, the scribes. Many laws necessitated also the existence of a class who could give all their time to obeying these laws—the Pharisees, the nationalists of their period. While scribes and Pharisees might rise to power from any social stratum, the actual political authority was in the hands of the worldly, cynical Sadducees, the rich hereditary aristocrats, always sympathetic with whatever government was in con-

trol, and always supplying from its own ranks that chief of Jewish officials, the high priest. In the church of Jesus's day, conduct and character were nothing; keeping laws and observances was everything. Religion was wholly devoid of any vitalizing humility. The scribe was atrophied with the pride of learning, the Pharisee was atrophied with the pride of righteousness, the Sadducee was atrophied with the pride of politics. It is almost impossible for us, as we gaze at the formalism and hypocrisy and commercialism that swathed the forgotten piety of Abraham as if they had been grave clothes, to understand the bravery of Jesus when he dared to summon again to life the buried corpse of Jewish faith.

Its Elements of Life

Jesus found a dying nation and a dying creed, and he adventured a daring method of recreation, fearlessly excising the elements of decay and fearlessly remotiving the elements of life. Quite apart from the three agencies, law, church, politics, that governed Jewish thought, there still existed in Palestine, and

especially in Galilee, those two elements without which no country can have a live religion—namely, God and the people. Dying of its own exclusiveness, the church had created a god in its own image, making him a fetish with a noble name but with a bloodthirsty nature. As for the people, the scribes and Pharisees, except when they needed mob sanction of their own prerogatives, as in the legalized lynching of Jesus, cheerfully relegated the people to limbo—"This people who knoweth not the law is accursed." No member of the toiling, unsanctified masses was permitted entrance to a Pharisee's house, but the masses might, if they liked, stand and look on while he prayed. Jesus came to a dying religion, but he brought back to it those two elements of vigor, God and the people, for he succeeded in renaming the god of sacrifice, "Father," and to the people he preached belief in themselves. It was impossible for Jesus and the Pharisees of his day to exist side by side in the Jewish church, and so, in a panic of fear for its own prestige, his own church crucified him. It was impossible for Jesus and the scribes of his day to exist

side by side in the field of intellect, and so, to prove to themselves their own dignity, these intellectuals laughed at him. It was impossible for Jesus and the Sadducees of his day to exist side by side in the Jewish system of government; it was imperative for national security, so argued those Jewish politicians, that the Golden Rule be made a capital offense.

To me the chief mystery set before my faith in the man Jesus is his faith in men. Materialists appear to be staggered by those narratives that tell how Jesus put life into dead bodies, but they do not appear to be at all staggered by those narratives that tell how he put life into dead minds. This is precisely the miracle he performed upon the dead Palestine of his day. His method was to look for any seeds of life that might be anywhere in the arid soil and release them to growth. For this method the circumstances of his own social class and environment peculiarly equipped him. His humble family and his despised countryside were little touched by the effete influences of priestcraft and of contemporary politics. He grew

up among the people, one of them in blood, possessing from the first all the vigor of their point of view. His growth was never crippled by being bent to an aristocratic attitude. For the formation of a personality, he had all the advantages of poverty and obscurity. He was free to be a forceful human being because from the first there was no blight upon him of riches or of noble birth to separate him from his fellows and cheat him of the heritage of varied contacts, and of listening to the wisdom of unlettered minds. Not being born to wealth or to social prominence, he could grow to a dynamic manhood, because he was never dwarfed, as an aristocratic child must always be, by constant fear, by the incessant menace of possessions that may be lost. The high-born child rarely escapes the conviction that his very identity is bound up with his possessions, that without money or social superiority he cannot be himself. Jesus grew up with that self-dependence which vitalized him and enabled him to vitalize others. His early surroundings compose one element in that personal magnetism which makes him unique in history.

Jesus was rustic, not urban, which means that while his humble birth enriched him by giving him the people's point of view, his country surroundings prevented his having too much the people's point of view. He could not be dominated by the mind of the herd, because his whole being was clarified by living with the hills. In every dilemma of his career you find him climbing the nearest height, all alone, to find the explanation. No proletarian Utopia can ever have the vitality of that social order Jesus died to inaugurate, because the proletariat itself is a city product. Its horizons are walled in and it formulates a social structure founded wholly on the nature of men and receiving no illumination from the nature of trees. If Jesus had been brought up in some swarming, reeking alley of Jerusalem, he would doubtless have attained to all his burning sympathy for men, but he could not have had that life-giving poise granted only to a man who constantly corrects his knowledge of humanity by comparing it with his knowledge of the growth-laws of mustard seeds and wheat.

Galilee, that beautiful fertile northern strip of Palestine, had all the vitality of a province scorned by the priests and neglected by the politicians of fashionable Jerusalem. Simple, self-respecting families, stanch to the old vigorous Judaism, were common in Galilee. A boy memorizing Jewish Scripture in the synagogue schools of Nazareth or Bethsaida or Capernaum would have learned the Law, but rather the Law of Moses than that of the rabbis, nor, as is evidenced by the quickness of Jesus's quotations, would a Galilean boy have learned only the Law, but also other portions of Old Testament Scripture, for God as reverenced in Galilee was not alone the God of Moses, the lawgiver, but of Isaiah, the prophet, and of David, the singer. The stalwart fishermen by the shining waters of Gennesaret could far more readily than the turbaned crafty Pharisees of Jerusalem accept the new truth that their ancient Jehovah was their own present father.

While Judea was the center of an ingrowing nationalism and a fanatic ecclesiasticism, Galilee was cosmopolitan. Always a thoroughfare

of trade between east and west, Galilee, as far back as Isaiah, was called "Galilee of the nations." There were so many Greeks in Galilee that the whole region was bi-lingual, everyone speaking both Greek and the Hebrew patois Aramaic. Everywhere Helenes and Hebrews were house neighbors, the first being the business men of the community, the second the farmers and craftsmen. The Galileans, also, rubbed elbows with nations other than the Hellenic—all the tribes of Syria, all the many-hued strangers moving over those provincial highways in the unceasing caravans that chained together east and west. A place where many races met in mutually illuminating contact, Galilee was a promising field for the germinating of a world religion.

Yet, viewed from another aspect, Galilee was the seat of the most violent chauvinism of its time. Contact with pagan merchantmen developed breadth of sympathy in some characters, but in more it intensified nationalistic feeling. In proportion as this feeling caused the Jews to preserve their creed intact against polytheism, it was good; in proportion as it

caused them to hate their neighbors, it was bad. The Galileans were impetuous, not crafty. While the Jews of Jerusalem were ready to compromise with the Romans and to satisfy their own nationalism with elaborate ritual and hair-splitting observance, the Galileans were ready at any moment to flame into insurrection against the foreign despot and re-establish their old Jewish supremacy. They looked always for a leader to direct this ambition. Jesus himself possessed the Galilean temperament. It was a Galilean who, single-handed, scourged the host of money-changers from the temple. Within himself Jesus had learned to curb and redirect his native vehemence before he tried to curb and redirect it in his countrymen. For his use their fire was perilous, but promising. Only one of the twelve men Jesus chose to spread his teaching was not from Galilee, but from Judea, Judas Iscariot. Jesus recognized all the dangers in Galilean nationalism, but dared to trust its vitality. He took it and endeavored to cleanse it of its murderous violence. He took patriotism with all its vigor, and tried to turn it from exacting the service

of other peoples to offering service to all the world. He took that old name, "Galilee of the nations," and made it new.

Jesus, who always recognized all that was vital and rejected all that was moribund in all tradition, readily availed himself of the traditional dignity of the prophet. Always at intervals in Jewish history there had appeared suddenly out of the desert mystery, men of power, austere, visioned, incorruptible. These men were fearless and electric, rebuking degenerate kings and priests and achieving for a time the resurrection of religion. Jesus appreciated the popular respect for the prophet, with all its live implications, and appropriated the prophet's rôle to fit his own destiny.

Jesus employed for his own purposes not only the prophet's rôle, but actual prophecy. The Jews were unique in their period, because, with all their degradation, they were an expectant race, while the races that ruled them, with all their power, were despairing. The gods of Egypt and Assyria, of Greece and Rome, were dead. Cynical and disillusioned,

the proud Roman world fell so low that it worshiped the emperor. But the Jews, in chains to Rome, still believed in their own restoration. Every Jewish boy knew by heart the prophecies of the hero to come, who should make Israel again supreme as in the time of David. These prophecies ranged in value from the beautiful and spiritual to the incoherent and gross, but they were all instinct with hope. Crude Galilee, mongrel Samaria, subtle Judea, all alike believed in a great captain who should be born to their nation. They spoke of him popularly as the Anointed, the king set apart by the ceremony of oil poured from a chrism; they called this hypothetical national hero the Christ. The conception of the Christ differed according to class and individual, but always it was a conception of restored prestige, always it meant the striking off of the shackles of fear from a proud nation enslaved. Jesus took this popular conception of the Christ with all its vital promise, and endeavored to transform it into a new life, striving to divert the expectation from physical to spiritual supremacy. The effort showed a madman's confidence in men,

and for it Jesus died. Yet to what degree he succeeded in regenerating an ancient idea can be seen by the measureless difference of meaning with which the Jews of his day used, and with which we of to-day use, the word Christ.

Summary: Jesus's Relation to His Background

This examination of the historical conditions surrounding Jesus is frankly cursory, unscholarly, and superficial, but some such survey is imperative, for any man who wishes to examine as independently as possible the actual records of Jesus. For myself, as I look at Jesus against the background of his own era, he seems to me the greatest example in history of personal dynamic. I know of no other character whose life purpose faced such handicap. The difficulties set before Jesus explain his failure; the advantages he used do not explain his success, unless you allow for an absolutely unique initiative in the employment of them. Jesus stands out in history as the most iconoclastic destroyer of all that is decadent, and the most daring regenerator of all that is vital,

for the development of human individuality. For myself, without a knowledge of his times I find Jesus inexplicable; with a knowledge of his times I find him even more inexplicable, for nothing solves for me the puzzling fact that an obscure young Jewish carpenter succeeded in so impressing himself upon history as to set his name upon a new era, so that to-day, in the very same breath with which we announce that science has once more sealed Jesus into a tomb, we label every new scientific discovery with the date of his birth.

Chapter IV: The Four Biographies of Jesus

External Evidence

Four mutilated puzzling little pamphlet biographies, facsimiles of old Greek manuscripts, give all that we know of the man who has had the most far-reaching influence in all time. I use the word far-reaching advisedly, for I know the statistics of the number of Buddhists, Confucians, and Mohammedans alive to-day, but I know of no one who is to-day throwing stones at Buddha, Confucius, or Mohammed. It is only a live man that people stone, and only because they are afraid of him. The four gospels are alike in being the record of an effort to destroy and bury from notice a living man. All four end with a broken, incomplete account of his return from the grave. Two of them give the narrative of this man's

birth. Two of them, the earliest and the latest, confine themselves to his public career, a career possibly three years long, possibly not more than half that. No one of them gives the slightest clue to one mysterious fact—how did a man possessing such force that by the sheer power of his personality he changed the whole course of human thought, how did such a man keep that power suppressed, unknown to even those nearest him, for thirty years? For myself, the untold story of Jesus's long years of obscurity is as challenging as anything the gospels tell of his brief months of eminence. In trying to fathom his strange effect on present-day thought, I feel that his possible motive for his long concealment reveals a most significant element in his influence.

Although for myself the internal evidence of the gospels is the strongest argument for their truth, there is much that is most suggestive for the thinking Christian in the opinions and hypotheses of present-day biblical scholarship. Risking always a layman's inaccuracy, I gather that the most scientific and most recent scriptural research tends to place

the composition of the gospels nearer and nearer to the events they chronicle. This seems to be the latest opinion of specialists too eminent and too scholarly to be lightly set aside, yet it is opinion generally ignored by rationalist writers of the day, who always appear to presuppose a long period of wonder-tale and folk-lore as elapsing between Jesus's death and the first accounts of it. The synoptics in their chronological order, Mark, Matthew, Luke, were actually written from A.D. 60 to 80. Jesus was executed, according to our dating, in A.D. 33. Lincoln was assassinated in 1865. Suppose there had come into existence between the years 1890 and 1910 three biographies of Lincoln so satisfactory to the people who must actually have known him that all other accounts were spontaneously rejected and these three given a universal acceptance, these three biographies of Lincoln would have corresponded exactly to the first three biographies of Jesus.

A small but most careful group of present-day investigators in textual criticism is at this very moment inclining to the hypothesis of an

Aramaic original—possibly to be discovered at any time by archæologists—from which all three synoptics borrow. Such an Aramaic original, it is thought, may have existed within a decade of Jesus's death, and may itself have been the expansion of actual written notes taken by some of the disciples. It appears to be an undisputed fact that the first three narratives were written within a comparatively short time after Jesus's execution, yet even so, they were not written in their surviving shape until the preaching and the reporting of eye-witnesses were becoming impossible through persecution and martyrdom. The three synoptic gospels are merely the writing down for transmission of words that Christian missionaries had previously been speaking for twenty-five years. Jesus had not been in the grave two months before the words that he said and the deeds that he did were being broadcasted throughout the pagan world through the underground agencies of the always potent humble. Two months is a very brief period for inventions and inaccuracies to arise.

While the most authoritative research of to-

day tends to place the gospel narrative closer and closer to its events, still there was, of course, an important intervening period, however brief, when all the transmission was oral. Just here we should be on our guard against the proud modern fallacy of endowing the sturdy ancients with our own incapacities. The fact that a college boy of to-day could not possibly learn by heart the hour-long discourses of some teacher does not disprove the fact that a young Galilean of the year A.D. 30 could easily have done so. A Galilean fisher-boy might even have remembered such discourses for seventy years or more. We moderns always minimize the exactness with which in earlier days history and literature were handed down by word of mouth.

We depend so completely on our eyes that our ears have atrophied. But before the invention of printing, ears were more to be depended on than eyes. Every Galilean disciple had been as carefully trained in verbal memory and accuracy as Jesus himself had been taught in the synagogue school at Nazareth the Scripture that he quotes so readily. Every fisherman

friend of Jesus was as well equipped to remember and quote the New Testament message as Jesus, the carpenter, was equipped to remember and quote the Old Testament message. The words of Jesus later became subject to all the accidents of manuscript, papyrus, vellum, ink, copying, translation, but the mutilations and imperfections are not to be attributed to his disciples' memories—those were true and living parchment.

Before entering the gospels to discover their intrinsic evidence, one must note another external fact of importance—namely, the antiquity of the existing manuscripts. Not only is the gospel account almost contemporaneous with the life of Jesus, but the actual parchment on which that account is written is hundreds of years older than the manuscripts we possess of Greek and Latin literature. Now I believe there was a real pupil of Socrates named Plato who wrote an account of his teacher's life and discourses. I also believe there was a real pupil of Jesus named John who wrote an account of his teacher's life and discourses, but the manuscript responsible for my belief in Jesus and

his John is six centuries older than the manuscript responsible for my belief in Socrates and his Plato.

Internal Evidence, the Incongruities

So far, this approach to the gospels has been under the guidance of scholars, but faith is far too vital a need to be made dependent on any scholar's learning, however erudite. Not what other people say about the man in the records, nor what they say about the records themselves, but what the man in that ancient narrative says to each one of us, is the sole issue before anyone who would make lucid to his own mind the foundations of his belief.

If many people fail to discover the Jesus of the gospels for the simple reason that they are not familiar with them, far more fail to discover him because they are too familiar with them. One might conceive the books of the world as tombs in a splendid cemetery, surviving in the heart of a bustling city. The tomb of Jesus is a moss-grown mausoleum. Many persons would pass it by, incapable of believ-

ing that a modern scientific mind could find anything of interest in a spot so time-worn. Many others, questioned, would answer: "The tomb of Jesus? Why, yes, of course we know it well, every block of it, inside and out; been going up and down past it to business these two thousand years!"

There are few things harder than to enter, as if one had never seen them before, the four little moss-grown books that entomb Jesus. Yet to me it seems just as legitimate to use imagination in studying these books as to use imagination in advertising a dentifrice or in inventing a gas bomb.

As I try to enter the gospels with that fresh imagination which I should accord, as a mere principle of critical integrity, to a newly discovered play by Sophocles, I find these four biographies of Jesus absolutely unique in my knowledge of literature. To dismiss them with scorn is so easy that I wonder anyone tries to. Of course they are credulous, of course they are inconsistent, of course they are naïve as the mind of a new-born baby. They are broken off here, they are repetitions there. I am speak-

ing now to my agnostic friends who are genuinely nonplused that any thinking man should be so superstitious as to credit the New Testament narrative. To those friends I say, I do not ask that you try to share my convictions, but merely that you try to understand them.

I cannot tell whether it is the inconsistencies of the gospels that more convince me or their consistencies. At least I find the latter immeasurably more impressive. Suppose incident had dovetailed into incident with mathematical nicety, what would have been surer proof of falsehood than such obvious collusion? It seems generally admitted that the gospels were written by four different men at four different dates, and possibly at four different places. Therefore, how account for their singular harmony of impression? The discrepancies of the gospels are concerned with incidents and with sequence of incidents. Their remarkable accord is in the matter of the teaching they present and the portraits they paint. The dynamic of that teaching and the truth of those portraits furnish for faith material more arresting and more challenging than a narrative

that itself stands absolutely apart from all other written chronicle. The ordinary man, reading for himself the first four books of the New Testament, should bring to them, it goes without saying, the same general knowledge of the development of history and of literature that he would employ in any other critical adventure. The sacred books of the first century are worthy of as respectful handling as the secular. It is not self-respecting to study Juvenal with sympathy, but to study John with contempt.

As one views the incongruities of the fourfold biography of Jesus, one should surely have sufficient intelligence to step back two thousand years before exacting of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John either the historical or the literary consciousness characteristic of the twentieth century. Historical accuracy, as we know it, did not exist anywhere in the world at the time of Jesus, and least of all in Palestine. History as an inexorable evolutional process always coercing all the actions and the characteristics of men to the type of their own decade,

is a very recent idea. The Jews of Jesus's day recognized no incongruity in expecting an obscure unlettered carpenter to repeat in the era of the Roman Empire the exploits of David, the shepherd-king of Judea. Yesterday, to-day, and forever were mingled in the Jewish mind of that time in a way most difficult for us to appreciate. And yet for us to demand of Galilean provincials our own sense of historical perspective is to be ourselves curiously provincial in attitude, curiously deficient in the first requisite of critical equipment.

We undervalue the enormous advantage of those practical aids to accuracy taken for granted to-day. Twenty centuries ago, chronology and geography hardly existed. Luke, who of all the four comes nearest the requirements of a modern biographer, has a hard enough time with his dates—during the rule of this or that king or tetrarch or governor, this in his clumsy, yet unavoidable method of placing momentous occurrences. Works of reference were either altogether lacking or altogether unavailable. The humble biographers of Jesus, and their descendant copyists, could

hardly have traveled to Athens or Alexandria to find a library, and if they had, who would have showed them a path among masses of uncatalogued manuscripts? The historians of Jesus have given the world a deathless narrative, but under such unfavorable conditions of period and of place as to make not its inadequacy, but its adequacy, an enigma.

The inaccuracies of the evangel that has come down to us must of course be ascribed not only to the faults of its original composition, but to all the varied fortune due to copying and handling. Writing material more fragile than papyrus can hardly be conceived. Mark's account of the Resurrection breaks off with the breaking of the pulp-sheet on which it was inscribed. Divine words may lie beneath the erasures on any parchment. Not that the account has come to us probably marred and elliptic, but that through all the accidents of the long centuries it has come to us at all, and come shining and strange and startling, is the marvel.

One should not forget, too, that, frail as was papyrus, fallible as was parchment, uncer-

tain as were stylus and quill and the copyist's attention, all these means to the transmission and spreading of Jesus's influence were expensive, and the earliest church and the earliest missionaries were penniless. In these later days of campaigning and publicity, it is interesting to note that the message that has gone farthest in history was propagated not by means of money, but by means of something else more potent. Possibly one might attribute both the imperfections and the perfection of the gospel to the fact that it is a poor man's story.

The pitiful brevity of the gospel records, in which obviously much of intense interest is omitted, is largely due to a simple contemporary cause—they were written by men in a desperate hurry to get their message before the world in time to save the world. The early church expected the second coming of Jesus at any day or hour, certainly within the lifetime of the men who had known him. This belief helped to give those first missionaries the courage necessary to spread their faith. Jesus's message was first published entirely through the extemporaneous preaching of the

facts of his life. In that brief, arrested career those first preachers found that certain incidents and discourses met with readier response than others, and so employed them over and over and finally committed them to writing, that this form might be preserved and carried about by missionaries as rapidly as possible before the end should come. Only one of the gospels is written by a man who had lived long enough to know that the end was not soon, and also that the facts given in the three previous accounts needed supplementing and interpreting. John is the only one of the evangelists who writes with all eternity at his elbow.

To plead that the gospels are in any sense adequate or exact histories would be to pick them out of their convincing historical setting and set them down at least sixteen hundred years later, but it is conceivable that the subtle scientific terms and methods by which we explain away Jesus are as inadequate to deal with an enigmatic personage as the naïve ignorance and the quaint language in which his contemporaries explained him. It is conceivable that the method and the words of a present-day

rationalist, writing the history of Jesus, will seem just as crude and naïve to the minds of the year A.D. 4000 as the method and the words of the evangelists seem to us to-day. It is possible that it will always be difficult for any historian, restricted to the mental fashions of his own decade, ever to write the life of a timeless character.

First-century Palestine was as deficient in literary consciousness as in historical. To ascribe to the gospels any intentional falsehood or invention is to be a most disingenuous critic, for it is to attribute to the crude and ignorant men to whom Jesus first intrusted his doctrines, the careful artifice, the elaborate research, the subtle artistic skill that belong only to the modern mind. In that age and until far into later times, individual authorship was nothing. A narrator could borrow or discard because all that mattered to writer or to reader was the thing written. While we must live in a period obsessed by personal and irrelevant detail, the evangelists had the advantage of concentrating merely on their evangel. Every

time I read the gospels I am more profoundly impressed by the utter guilelessness of the writers. Their minds seem transparent as spring water. All the auditors of Jesus as exhibited so naïvely—Pharisees, apostles, beggars, scribes—seem incapable of understanding his simplest words, or imagining his most obvious motives, or anticipating his most natural acts. People who were incapable of understanding the actual Jesus when he was alive, could hardly have become capable of inventing after he was dead a Jesus different from the Jesus they had known. Imagination is not made overnight. When Jesus chose his first pupils from among the dull he showed long psychological foresight into the doubts of the modern and clever.

The evangelists convince me because they don't try to. As I read them, the gospels appear to me to be composed not to proselyte, but to transmit—to be addressed, that is, by men convinced to other men convinced. The only reason the record was written at all was for convenience in distribution. Both the term and the fact of literary art were conceptions

impossible to the biographers of Jesus of Nazareth. As I read, I feel as if I were eavesdropping; upon accuracy, listening to the white-hot words of fishermen still shaken by an astounding contact.

Internal Evidence, the Harmony

The discrepancies of the gospels seem to me the strongest witness to their authenticity, if they were what they purport to be, four narratives from out first-century Palestine. But always to me the harmony of the gospels is more amazing than any discrepancy. Four different men report words utterly unparalleled in the knowledge of any of them. These men were letter-perfect in rabbinical doctrine. They neither knew nor conceived any other form of righteousness, but against the teachings of the scribes the words of Jesus flame with iconoclasm. Four different hands record these words, four different minds, staggered by their novelty and their daring, might have misconstrued their meaning. Yet from the first verse of Matthew to the last verse of John, the doctrine Jesus taught stands forth as one, as

indivisible to the four minds that recorded it as it was inconceivable by any one of them.

Four brief narratives reveal with uttermost sincerity four men struggling to tell the story of a man utterly unprecedented in the experience or the knowledge of his contemporaries. Each of these narratives presents a different aspect of this mysterious personage, and yet, after one has read all four, he stands forth as perfectly consistent. This is an amazing fact. But the portrait of Jesus is not the only portrait to rise up before us, an harmonious entity. All the men and women that appear, all vivid as life itself, whether described by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, are always perfectly in character. If four different men at four different dates had taken the plot of "Hamlet," and written a play upon it, is it conceivable that a modern student, reading the four plays, would afterward have in his mind one single harmonious conception, rather than four diverse conceptions, of the characters of Polonius, Lærtius, Gertrude, Ophelia? There are in the gospels disparities so obvious that fabrication would never have permitted them to

exist, but these disparities have to do with mere events and mere order of events. On the other hand, the teaching that the gospels inculcate, and the portraits they draw, are so consistent that for my own mind the sole explanation is that all four records have reference to the same actual words and the same actual people.

The Argument from the Gospel of John

I have written so far of the four evangelists as if all four, though individual, stood on an equality, but for two thousand years the world has grouped three of the gospels together and set one of them apart. It has been as hard for John's book to gain admittance to the New Testament as it is for John's master to gain admittance to our lives. Yet John's book and John's friend stand as inescapable facts far easier to deny than to account for. I shall never know how it is possible for anyone to read the gospel of John through from first word to last and not believe it written by that man who, of all men having names known to history, knew Jesus best in life, and thought about him most and longest after his cruci-

fixion. I cannot believe that any man except one recreated by Jesus could have created the book of John. This is deduction from the internal authority of the fourth gospel, but there is external evidence, too. This gospel is absolutely known to have been in general use by the Christian church before the year A.D. 160 and probably far earlier. Its actual authorship is generally dated at A.D. 100. Now the most cursory knowledge of literary history and equipment and ability would surely admit that there was not living anywhere in the world prior to 160, or for a thousand years after, anyone capable of the research into Jewish law and custom and geography, or capable of the imaginative insight into alien modes of thought, or endowed with the spiritual originality necessary to write the book of John, except a man who had been an eye-witness of his own narrative. We moderns sometimes exhibit a grotesque self-flattery, for only moderns could believe that any man could have invented the God-man of John. Strange that those among us to-day who most vociferously assert the bestiality of human nature, quite as confidently

ascribe to human invention the sublimity of the Book of John. As I grope for the foundations of my faith, I cannot, as an honest thinker, ever neglect, while I weigh the testimony of written Scripture, the testimony of unwritten scripture spread all around me in terms of real people and capacities. From nothing I have ever read or observed of the workings of the human mind, can I believe that it could ever have spontaneously produced the gospel of John. For myself, I can never escape the fact of sublimity merely by denying it. Reasons for disregarding the fourth evangel are obvious. Its Jesus is too disconcerting for acceptance. No one can ever stand face to face with the portrait of Jesus painted by John and ever again be conceited, and conceit is the only protection Caliban, emergent, has against the blazing tenderness of God. Absurd as it may seem for me to pit my brain against Doctor Crile and Harvey Robinson and Bertrand Russell and Sigismund Freud and a thousand other rationalists as sincere, I say to them and to every agnostic friend of mine, it is impos-

sible for my intelligence to believe that the gospel according to John is merely the outcome of the instinct of self-preservation as expressed by an animal who was quite recently an amœba.

Chapter V: Old Words and Old Meanings

Spiritual vs. Literal Inspiration

THE people who flash forth from the pages of written Scripture are more alive and instant to our comprehension than are the words by which they are transmitted to us. One of the most effective methods of burying Jesus is to call him obsolete, but the only thing about Jesus that is obsolete is the language in which his history has come down to us. A man is not dead just because his tomb has been built of dead stones. Jesus, whose character utterly transcended its contemporary setting, still accepted every obstacle of that setting. He was forced to express new ideas in old terms; not until those new ideas had transformed men's thoughts could new terms be employed. Jesus had before him the desperate hazard of intrust-

ing a teaching vitally new to minds cramped by contemporary Pharisaism and at times almost ludicrously puzzled by novel interpretations of ancient phrases. When one views the profound significance of Jesus's message to all time, one cannot but feel the pathetic subterfuge and superstition of insisting on the verbal inspiration of Scripture. To exalt the importance of words as words is, too often, to evade their importance as commands. Jesus appreciated the peril of substituting controversy for conduct, and therefore said that the sole way to understand his teaching was to live it, thus anticipating the chief stumbling block to present-day faith, for what the churches wish us to believe is always matter for dispute, but what Jesus wishes us to do is still to-day, despite all the accidents of language, too plain for any man's disputing.

If the mere words are sacrosanct, please, just which words, those of Jesus's own lost Aramaic, those of Luke's Greek, those of Wiclif's English, those of the King James version, or those of Weymouth, Ballantine, or van Loon? Which words, whose words, are

to be chosen as literally inspired? Now Jesus had just two ways of writing his personality upon the pages of history, and one of those ways was words, and because the words were pitifully limited to the limited usage of his own period, they have always put limitations on the natural, vigorous spread of Jesus's evangel. In the relation of that evangel to the words into which it has been successively translated, this has always happened—the letter has always killed it, the spirit has always given it life. The spirit of Jesus's message is so invincibly stimulating that at whatever date it is translated into contemporary speech, that date at once becomes the starting point of a spiritual development which, continuing for a century or two, then requires a fresh translation to fit the thought itself germinated by those earlier terms grown obsolete. The test of a creed's vitality is that the words of which it is composed should necessarily become too cramped to hold the spiritual content that the creed itself has engendered. All live seeds burst their casing just as all live persons burst the cerements of dead language, and just as a living

God folds from him the wrappings of a finite creed.

The Contemporary and the Universal Meaning

Jesus always distinguished shrewdly between what was vital in the contemporary material on which he must make his impression and what was decadent. Jesus, like Shakespeare, was not inventive, but creative, and like him took what he found ready in human nature, and elevated it to the height of his own purpose. Each of the two had too much respect for the men of his own period to wish to separate himself from them by any eccentricity of his own. Shakespeare took the grotesque tragedy of blood and recreated it by putting into it all the subtlety of a Hamlet. Jesus took the poor little provincial dialect he was born to, and attached to it meanings that have a universal and eternal application. Yet the life Jesus put into these terms has never wholly escaped the contamination of the death element there is in all language. Language is always a changing thing, and so outworn terms are always being sloughed off and new terms being

sprouted. Because language is incessantly altering, to make Christ's teaching dependent on the language of any one period is not to preserve that teaching, but to destroy it. Is it conceivable that anyone who believes Jesus indestructible can at the same time believe his survival dependent on any accident of mere words? To me it seems that the most reverent way to read the gospel of Jesus is in its successive translations from Mark to Moffat, for each of these translations will portray Jesus as he appears to the popular mind at that date, and the successive dates will furnish the only true chronological record of the Resurrection appearances of Jesus. Why be afraid that any change of words could annul him? In one way or another people are always burying Jesus, and always, divine, aloof, ironic, Jesus is emerging from the tomb with a new face.

Nothing has been a more death-dealing handicap to the adoption of Jesus's idealism than the way that successive periods of history have distorted to their own contemporary interpretation, terms that Jesus employed to fit the minds and usage of his own immediate audi-

ence. The reader who goes to four little Greek manuscripts to eavesdrop upon Jesus the street preacher should keep always sharp before his eyes the faces of that dusty crowd upon some corner of old Jerusalem. To-day Jesus is often separated from us by much pomp and circumstance, by much embroidered ritual and elaborate dogma, but the Jesus of first-century Jerusalem appeared in the humble guise of a quack doctor and itinerant preacher, being regarded by those high in church and state and fashionable society much as we regard a Salvation Army captain. Up in Galilee Jesus had from time to time a great following, but even there the mob was so fickle that it was ready to make him a king one day, and the next morning go off grumbling because he refused to feed them indefinitely. But in his own Jerusalem Jesus did not make much more impression than he would to-day in our own New York. He was a discredited street orator, put out of the church because of his iconoclastic remarks. So he stood and preached anywhere to anyone low enough in the social scale to stop and listen to him. Thus circumscribed to the

mentality of his hearers, Jesus spoke as an Oriental to Orientals—his language was spiritual, pictorial, flashing out from time to time in Oriental imagery, brutally vivid. Any thinking Christian should also admit that Jesus was himself restricted by the language and the mentality of his own time and place, precisely as his hearers and as we ourselves are thus restricted. Unless Jesus accepted every human handicap, he has no message for humanity. Unless he was first contemporary, he cannot be eternal. Unless Jesus was a man, to call him God is to invalidate his achievement. We should have vivid in our minds the scene, the date, the audience, and the speaker, before we either accept the words of Jesus as being the foundation of elaborate theological systems, or reject them, for the same reason.

Jesus taught certain principles of conduct that he believed eternal, but he was forced to teach them in words that he knew to be ephemeral. Modern current opinion, both educated and uneducated, both in the church and out of it, credits Jesus with the invention, rather than the mere illustrative employment, of

many conceptions popularly labeled Christian, such as Heaven, Hell, the Day of Judgment, the Second Coming. But the real fact appears to be that in the current rabbinical teaching, in the late popular prophetic rhapsody, in the constant literal interpretation of figurative and spiritual Scripture—in other words, in the minds of his audience—Jesus found ready to his hand, and all made before he was born, the conception of a Heaven where the good were rewarded, a Hell where the bad were punished, an entire system of demonology and angelology, a Last Day when the righteous and the sinful should be separated, the flaming advent of a savior from the sky. Jesus did not originate, but utilized, these conceptions as a vehicle of new truth to minds bound by old ideas, and undoubtedly one reason we of to-day, both those of us within and those of us without the churches, come to grief in our understanding of these ancient terms, which have now become so distressingly controversial, is that the brains that received them from Jesus's lips were brains so held by the contemporary connotations that they were unable to trans-

mit them to us with the spiritual richness and clarity which Jesus attached to them. There is no sure way to interpret the words of Jesus except by incessantly referring them to his character. Before Jesus's time and after it, through all the centuries, how much has been said and written and believed about the Day of Judgment, but look at the parable of the Last Day, as Jesus spoke it and read it in the light of his own constant practice of his own preaching, and see if it teaches anything but his own new method of demarcation, inconceivably novel to an audience emasculated by Pharisaism, that good people are those who do good, not merely refrain from evil, and that doing good means service to others, not merely obedience to ecclesiastics—add to this the satiric humor which pictures the good as asking with sincerity, When did we serve God? and the wicked as asking with hypocrisy, When did we *not* serve God?—and you have an illustration of how Jesus took the Day of Judgment as the church people of his time were teaching it, and put into it a deathless principle of behavior

that turned against the Pharisees a weapon taken from their own doctrines.

Jesus's Employment of the Word Hell

There are throughout the entire gospel narrative many phrases and terms used by Jesus that have been appropriated by theology to fit its own narrower ideas, but of these phrases perhaps none have served more to nullify the purpose of Jesus than the mediæval and the modern construction put on the three, "Hell," "forgiveness of sins," and the "Kingdom of Heaven." If for myself I frankly reject the theological elaboration of these words simply because I cannot see that Jesus used them with any such man-made meanings, I must apologize to the devout for what may seem an irreverence. There are many people to whom the dogma and authority of others will always be vital conditions for their own spiritual growth. To these I say, the test of any article of any creed is that it shall liberate rather than constrict, that it shall make us discontented with our actions rather than complacent in our beliefs. The study of Jesus is an adventure in

aspiration never to be circumscribed. Regard for doctrine taught, rather than for doctrine lived, was the essence of Pharisaism, and what Pharisaism did to Jesus in the year A.D. 33 is still plain in the year 1925.

Throughout all the two thousand years of theological history, how many persons, one wonders, have ever really thought they themselves would ever go to Hell. Hell has always been a place where we consigned others, never ourselves, therefore, as feeding complacency. Hell has ever been stultifying as a motive, and whatever difficulties there may always be in construing the words of Jesus, as they have come down to us, there is always one clue: Jesus never stultifies, he always stimulates. It is by the light of this fundamental characteristic of every incentive that Jesus ever offered, that we must test all interpretations of all his sayings.

Now there are two widely different words used by Jesus, both alike translated, Hell. Jesus speaking to a group familiar with the environs of Jerusalem, from time to time employed the word Gehenna to describe the anni-

hilation to which all evil elements in life are doomed. Evil, he teaches, is always in process of conflict, constantly menacing our free development, constantly itself being cut away from us and annihilated. By means of quick impressionist language Jesus is exhorting a quick, impressionable audience. Evil, he tells them, is being incessantly destroyed, just as in the public pit beyond the city walls the city refuse is being dumped into the scavenger fires of Gehenna, always kept burning for sanitary purposes. Jesus utilizes the word Gehenna as a vivid illustration precisely as some preacher to-day might refer to the municipal incinerating plant, to illustrate the principle of a cleansing destruction eternally operative.

The other term translated Hell, is the Greek word Hades, the name the Greeks applied to that vague region where souls survived, provided they did survive. The Hellenic race never had a vivid sense of the after-world, never let any dwelling on the end blur their bright sunshine, thus Hades throughout all Greek literature is merely the name for that shadowy spot where good and bad alike go

after death. Jesus employs the word Gehenna or the word Hades according to his context. It is better, he says, that a man cut out his eye, cut off his hand—that is, excise from his personality, at whatever cost, anything that stunts his spiritual growth—rather than that his whole being become so corrupt as to require, like city offal, the cleansing flames of Gehenna. But in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the word used is not Gehenna, but Hades. When one tries to go and listen to the language of Jesus on the spot where it was spoken, his employment of the words Gehenna and Hades seems a curiously slight foundation on which to erect the elaborate fabric of a mediæval Hell, and the fact that such a structure could have been conceived, so seductive for the imagination, so subversive for ethics, is only one instance to show how theology has caught at the words of Jesus and wrenched them from their contemporary setting and significance.

Unfortunately, to remove the words of Jesus from their contemporary setting is at the same time to remove from them their immediate message for our time as much as for their own.

Jesus always emphasized earth-life, not after-life. Therefore what he says of Hell should be read in connection with what he says of Heaven, and still more with what he says of earth. Like the kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of Hell is within us. To make either one a place rather than a condition of mind, is infantile. To remove either Heaven or Hell from Now and Here, and relegate them to some misty post-mundane existence, illustrates the subterfuge of all eras in evading Jesus's constant direction away from doctrine toward conduct.

It is only honest to admit that many of Jesus's allusions to Hell are puzzling. Possibly these passages have suffered above others in transmission, not alone through the difficulty of rightly reporting words often enigmatic to his immediate hearers, but far more through the slow development of human conceptions of the divine. Men have always made their own Hells, both those they merely described and those they actually lived, but what Jesus meant by Hell we are probably still too dense to comprehend. The thoughtful Christian can

only approximate that meaning by referring it to the meanings Jesus has put into other words. As slowly and humbly I try to formulate my own faith, more and more in my study of the records, I see Jesus as belonging not to a dead past, nor to an unborn future, but to the living present, and so for me always the test of Jesus's words is their immediacy, not whether they square with traditional dogma, but whether they square with the facts of daily living.

These, then, are my conclusions in regard to the whole conception of Hell in its relation to the history of human evolution: first, that it is not the conception of Jesus, but a misconception put upon his words; and second, that by all the laws of psychology that underlie it, the idea of Hell, whenever and wherever it has appeared, has always impeded the free and fearless development of the soul. Of one truth we may always be sure, Jesus never taught anything subversive to the spirit as it emerges from the beast, but in the whole idea of Hell there has always been more that is akin to the animal within us than to the man within us.

Obviously, it has always been impossible for the imagination to visualize Hell as a place of spiritual rather than of physical torment and yet it is a childish and retrogressive view of life to believe that sin, a spiritual offense, can be punished by bodily tortures. One of the greatest deterrents to a better social order to-day is that we still think of crime and punishment as two separated experiences. Our whole system of penology rests on this atavistic fallacy. We cannot advance far either as a race or as individuals until we recognize the truth that crime carries with it the instant penalty of a curtailment of personality, a truth always clear in Jesus's teaching. The conception of Hell has always cut deeper into our spiritual life than most of us would acknowledge, especially those of us who have always rejected it as a mere superstition. So long as any man thinks of the wages of sin as physical or as post-mundane, or as to be exacted either by an avenging public or by an avenging deity, that man has obscured for himself just those dangers and responsibilities which it is imperative for every

individual and for every system of government to recognize.

Perhaps there are no words that Jesus uses oftener than some form of the expression, Fear not. Any of us can recall instantly his iteration—Courage, Away with fear, Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith. With all his emphasis on the degrading influence of fear, Jesus could hardly have meant that we were to employ fear as a motive for goodness, that we were to be noble in this world as a means of avoiding agony in the next. If that notion is repugnant to the lowest of us, how much more repugnant to the man who was the highest idealist yet produced by humanity! One fact is conspicuous in Jesus's allusions to Gehenna —it is not God who puts us there, but ourselves. It is not Christ, but Christians, who have made God a punisher. No matter how we may twist the words of Jesus, we cannot make them represent God except as his father. Jesus asserts that when we choose evil, we automatically separate ourselves from God in this world quite as much as in any other. His point is that evil is instantly destructive of normal

growth, where or when or how we admit it to our character. Evil is that power which dwarfs and paralyzes personality. In his references to the scavenger fires of Gehenna, Jesus warns not against punishment by God, but against mutilation by ourselves. Surely we degrade the dignity of the human soul, utterly deny man's beauty and charity, so long as we think it possible for some of us to be happy in Heaven, while any of us are unhappy in Hell. So long as we believe that we are as beast-like as that, we shall never become human. We defile God so long as we believe him actuated by petty mortal vengeance.

The whole conception of Hell is only the extreme visualization of one of the most rudimentary elements of our being, but one of which we are always conspicuously vain—namely, our sense of justice. The picture of God as a punisher is savage and anthropomorphic, a picture made by ourselves for our own satisfaction. It is in utter contradiction to the portrait of God painted by Jesus for our aspiration. There is perhaps nothing we know so little about as justice. In fact, our

proud sense of justice may be only an intermediate faculty, to be outgrown the farther we advance toward an unknown goal. At any rate, the teaching of Jesus makes it plain that he expects our man-made justice, always reminiscent of the savage, to be replaced by a God-made kindness, always aspirant toward the divine. Because the character of Jesus has been written upon history in a medium more reliable than language, he himself must always be the clue to his words. No one who accepts the character of Jesus can accept a God who would permit a Hell.

Jesus's Employment of the Words, Forgiveness of Sins

I have dwelt upon this subject in order to accentuate, not only a principle of Jesus's teaching, but also a principle of my own faith-building, and that is, always to explain the obscurities of particular passages by reference to the longer context of gospel Scripture as a whole, and still more by reference to the far larger relation of Jesus's teaching to past history and to present chaos. If we are to accord

Jesus the same courtesy we pay to other heroes of past days, and permit words to vivify rather than to bury him, we shall be startled by his prevision of the latest psychological methods in regard to that experience called forgiveness of sins.

Jesus as a psychologist is a fecund theme. Jesus is not obsolete, but so far in advance of his own age and of ours that even now economics, sociology, and psychology are far behind him. While we write treatises concerning the mind of the mob, Jesus left no such treatises, but repeatedly it is told of him that he walked unscathed through a howling rabble mad to kill him. He did this, I believe, through no supernatural powers, but simply by exercising the normal force of an absolutely fearless man.

Jesus and the modern scientific miracle-man differ in this respect, the modern scientist has the advantage of technical language in which he may express himself, and of an audience educated to understand his explanation. Jesus had neither of these. The history of all discovery and invention reveals that often observant and adventurous individuals have known

and applied laws hundreds of years before others have revealed the underlying theory governing those laws. Just as Roger Bacon in the thirteenth century knew of the existence of germs but had no way of transmitting that knowledge, so Jesus knew the fact that two minds may occupy one body, but while Morton Prince can give an account of Miss Beauchamp, all Jesus could say to a dissociated personality was, "Come out of him." As I read from day to day each fresh achievement of science, it seems to me that the barrier between spirit and substance becomes every day thinner. As I read from day to day each past achievement of Jesus, it seems to me that he knew, better than for hundreds of years to come any of us will know, the relation of mind to matter. But Jesus's knowledge of the human mind, like his knowledge of the human soul, must be studied not through his explanation of it, but through his application of it, for Jesus can be observed constantly employing a science of the mind and of the soul, to which we, clumsy and hesitant as we are, are only slowly approximating. For example, telepathy

as a proved phenomenon is still in dispute by psychologists, even while there is hardly a day when one is not startled by the evidence of thought transference between members of the same household. Incessantly the gospel records say of Jesus that he read men's thoughts, knew exactly what the priests, skulking behind the temple pillars, were muttering, knew precisely what mental torments were holding sensitive bodies in thrall. The year A.D. 33 did not provide Jesus with the language, the receptive hearers, or the time, necessary to formulate his methods into terms and theory comprehensible to us. Mentally he was so far ahead of his own age that it was impossible for him to express his knowledge of the intellect in the language of his time. And spiritually he was so far ahead of our own age that it is equally impossible for him to express his knowledge of the spirit in the language of our time. Therefore both then and now he has chosen to publish his theories not through the medium of words, but through the medium of acts. Jesus's method of revelation is always through doctrine applied rather than through doctrine discussed,

and conspicuously in the matter of his healing he leaves us to deduce his convictions from our observations of his actions.

Jesus had to be instant in cures and concentrated in teaching, for he had only a few brief months in which to impress his methods upon the mind of humanity. With dynamic swiftness he went straight to the root of the torture, saying to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven. There seems to me as little reason for translating this laconic announcement of freedom into terms of elaborate theological dogma as for making out of Jesus's simple word, Gehenna, all the ramifying structure of the mediæval Hell. It should be the aim of the modern and practical Christian to be as modern and practical as was Jesus himself, and one means toward that end is to try to divest his words of their theological connotation, effete with controversy, and to realize their profound scientific accord with present-day thought. The greatest contribution made by modern psychology toward the emancipation of the human spirit is that knowledge of the subconscious which frees us from old fears. As I read the

Scriptural words that describe Jesus's actual practice of psychiatry I feel that he had a better working knowledge of the subconscious than Sigismund Freud. He accounts for his success, however, on a different hypothesis. He ascribes it to the influence of his own unfaltering faith in God upon the faltering faith of his patient. As I contemplate the instancy and permanence of his results, I feel that Jesus, who explains his cures by reference to the god within us, is as worthy of respectful attention as Freud, who explains his by reference to the beast within us.

Jesus had neither time nor respect for the dubious and lengthy intricacies of the psychoanalytic interview, but with a flash of penetration perceived the crux of his patient's trouble. As a sheer creator of personality in others Jesus was far in advance of present-day alienists, but he is in absolute accord with them in believing that the greatest deterrent to initiative is always, in last analysis, fear, in all its manifold variations. The words which Jesus and his historians are forced to employ have become staled to our ears and on our lips, and

thus prevent our seeing that when Jesus asserts his ability to forgive sins, and when the modern alienist asserts his ability to free us from the handicap of our past, the psychology employed is precisely the same, only Jesus's method goes farther, for he not only frees, but motivates and energizes, the personality thus freed. It requires some temerity to assert that to my own mind the method of Jesus in regard to that phenomenon termed forgiveness of sins is far more closely akin to the methods of the modern psychologist than it is to the connotation attached to those familiar words by the churches. This theological connotation has two aspects, the first viewing God as an avenger and creditor, canceling a debt owed to him, the second viewing the person forgiven as undergoing an experience as external and objective as having a debt canceled, and as concrete and pictorial as that of having a slate wiped clean. It is impossible for my faith to accept either of these aspects, for the first does not fit Jesus's portrait of God, and the second does not fit my everyday observation of human psychology. Jesus paints God not as a judge, but

as a father. A judge is responsible only for justice, that least understood and least analyzed of all human concepts. A father is not a judge. Whenever a human father constitutes himself a judge of his children, he exhibits a reversion and denies himself and them normal advance. One thing is clear in our evolutional progress, its constant trend to the differentiation of individuals. There can be no such differentiation without free initiative. God, therefore, shows his respect for the capacities of his sons by leaving us free to make our own experiments which may either liberate us for new adventure, or may chain us to age-old weaknesses. But God is father, and not judge, and therefore must feel himself responsible as does a human parent for the conditions that led up to the sin, and for those conditions that shall lead from it. Jesus reveals God to us as inalienably our father, because he believes this view of God above all other possible conceptions of divinity, the one most stimulating toward that human perfection he came to inculcate. Just in proportion as we permit any man-made dogma to attribute to God the

externality of a creditor, rather than the intimacy of a parent, we invalidate the purpose of Jesus's sojourn upon earth.

Any theological view that regards the forgiveness of sins as a process instantaneous and complete, involving no further care on the part of the sinner, is as false to the teaching of Jesus as it is to the teaching of modern psychology. While pronouncing his power to lift the burden of a man's past and to stand near to prevent the return of that burden, Jesus adds the sane and scientific caution, "Take care that thou sin no more." The life of Jesus shows that when he accepted for himself all human liability, he accepted recurrent temptation, intense to the very day of his death. That any man, after having yielded to the same crippling desire for half a lifetime, can escape overnight from all the penalty, is a falsehood never taught by the divine common sense of Jesus; what he does promise is that he will stand forever between us and the paralyzing influences of our past life if only we will consent to let him. He believed that not only such constant resistance of weakness, but also the educative

humility of such association with him, would inspire us to that ultimate perfection always shining clear to his vision as humanity's goal.

That the psycho-therapy of Jesus is in accordance with the methods of modern psychology, but transcends them, and that no aspect of his teaching or practice ever contradicts his fundamental conception of God as a father, are the two clues my faith has followed in order to ascertain the meaning Jesus himself attaches to those age-old words, "the forgiveness of sins."

Jesus's Employment of the Words, Kingdom of Heaven

Nothing is a clearer illustration of the peril of compressing into the narrow channels of dogma, the torrential force of Jesus's words than the way the world has always treated the most vitalizing of all his conceptions, "the Kingdom of Heaven." He did not make the term, but he tried to remake it. Nothing more tragic ever happened in all the history of human aspiration than the turning of the religion of Jesus from being what he died to make

it, a religion for this world, into a religion for the next. When Jesus took an old Hebrew phrase and preached his "kingdom of the heavens," he was not thinking of misty pinnacles in the sky, he was thinking of our Capitol in Washington. Jesus was no anæmic mystic, enervated with contemplation, like a mediæval monk. Jesus was no monk! "Eating and drinking, a wine-bibber and the intimate of renegades and harlots"—that is the way the gospels tell us that people talked against him, and yet, they say also, that not his bitterest enemies, hounding him, skulking always at his heels, could discover in him one tiniest sin! If ever a man loved life and the living of it, loved this planet and the people on it, it was Jesus of Galilee. Of what other hero in history is it written that he loved life so much that he sweated blood at the agony of leaving it? It is usually recorded of heroes that they met death nonchalantly. No soldier on any battlefield ever faced death in such a torture of relinquishment as did Jesus on Gethsemane. This was because, more than any man before or since, Jesus reverenced life. He was himself

young, vigorous, electric, burning to heal suffering bodies, and to clarify polluted creeds. To save, to teach! He felt himself blazing with the passion of service, and he had only a few brief hounded months in which to express himself. There is no intenser temptation known to history than that which Jesus resisted when he consented to draw back within himself all the upward surging of the splendid life within him, and submitted to be buried as a seed.

It is tragedy that a church named for one who was himself the livest man who ever lived, and who of all men most reverenced life, should itself have been accused for two thousand years, and justly accused, of being more concerned for the after-world than for this one! Jesus did not come to this world to show people how to get to another, but how to make this one more like the other. When Jesus talks of the Kingdom of Heaven, he is not talking about those endless Sabbaths the blessed ones see, but of what the blessed ones ought to be doing on this present Monday. When Jesus says that he gives people eternal life, he is not talking about an everlasting and vaguely glo-

rious nothingness; he is saying, I am ready to put into you at this very moment the principle of fearless and exhaustless growth.

Jesus cannot be held accountable for the after-worldliness of Christianity. The enervating ease and comfort of a post-mundane existence are not pictures drawn by Jesus. They were pictures painted first by the Jewish church of his time, and then amplified by the church of later times, and the effect in both instances was the evasion of earth and its problems. It is true that Jesus, in anguish of pity for the suffering he foresaw for his dearest friends, promises them "abiding places in my father's home." The word he uses is significantly colorless, utterly adequate, but without allurement. Jesus sanctioned no enervating raptures about the life to be. His promises in regard to heavenly bliss are vague when compared with the vigor he promises to his followers here on earth. To these he offers not ease and inertia, but persecution, scorn, ridicule, and ostracism, bitterer sacrifice to establish the rule of love than has ever yet been made to establish the rule of might.

Jesus meant by the term, Kingdom of Heaven, simply his own ideal social order, an ideal to be made actual by applied faith. The cynical Sadducees, who were the politicians of his day, regarded Jesus's Kingdom of Heaven exactly as the politicians in every country to-day would regard a Utopia preached to an inflammable crowd by some village carpenter. The term Kingdom of Heaven has been planted in the soil of human speech for two thousand years, but it is only recently that people have begun to wonder whether Jesus's unpractical kingdom of kindness may not be as promising an experiment as our present very unpromising kingdom of violence. Christ's idea of a social and economic structure founded on the principle of live-and-let-live must really have been growing vigorously, if secretly, for two thousand years, or to-day the most forcible pleading to allow Christ at last to enter Christendom would not be coming, as it is coming, from chambers of commerce! Jesus was very careful in his presentation of his new social order. He gave principles, but never particulars. Jesus never broke a law, and never made

one. But he taught people how to keep laws and how to make them. Keep laws and make them in such a way as to release rather than to restrict, personality—this is Jesus's law for lawmakers.

Dust-grimed and disregarded, Jesus has been tramping the streets of this world for two thousand years, so that to-day there is no one of us who is not familiar with his figure. So well does every one of us know him that there is not one of us who does not know exactly what would be Jesus's reply to any question, personal, national, international. There is no problem before any one of us to which we cannot hear Jesus's answer, down to his very phrasing, his intonation, his ironic gaze. There is not one of us who does not know that the sole reason we do not follow Jesus's advice is that we are afraid to.

This is one man's defense of the faith that is in him. I believe in Christianity because it has never been tried. How can Christianity be outworn if it has never yet existed? Where, when, has the experiment of Christianity ever been made by any nation? Once again Christ

has been killed by the word that describes him. Christianity is not Christ. In the eternal fight of faith against fear, we have permitted Christianity to become not Christ, but compromise. Because we are afraid to apply the ethics of the Kingdom of Heaven we have compromised with ecclesiasticism, so that it is possible in our churches to-day to wrangle over the manner of Jesus's infancy while within earshot five-year-olds are working ten hours on the truck farms of New Jersey! Because we are afraid to apply the politics of the Kingdom of Heaven, we compromise by saying that the place for Christians is in the church, but not in Cabinet offices. Because we are afraid to apply the politics of the Kingdom of Heaven, we compromise by saying that it is good for business to be friendly with a next-door neighbor, but bad for business to be friendly with a next-door nation. Of all Utopias, the one which people have most feared is Jesus's Kingdom of Heaven.

Christ has been buried under compromise, but the principles of his kingdom are uncompromising: truth always, and never subter-

fuge; kindness always, and never violence; love always, and never hatred; service always, and never selfishness; energy always, and never inertia; God always first, and money always last. How palpably absurd it all is! Yet the alternative that for twenty centuries we have preferred, is it any less absurd? Jesus believed his principles to be the only ones that guarantee the race growth, not decay; life, not death; evolution toward the man, not retrogression toward the beast. Nothing that has yet occurred has proved him wrong. Defiled as Christianity has been by its supporters, and derided as it has been by its opponents, wherever the principles of Jesus's social order have been embodied in any honest individual or enterprise, they shine forth as the most energizing ever observed. Nothing has delayed the realizing of Jesus's ideal so much as our persuading ourselves that this ideal is too good for this world, and therefore must refer to the next. But as Jesus uses the words, Kingdom of Heaven, they apply not to ancient Jerusalem, nor yet to Jerusalem the Golden; they apply to us and to now.

Christ was never the coward that the Christian is. He had immeasurably more faith in us than we have ever had in ourselves, for while he formulated the principles of his Christian commonwealth, he never formulated the particulars. He has been lately accused of uttering no protest against slavery, against war. No, he left to us the breaking of all fetters, the laying down of all swords. He set going in the world forces invincible for freedom and for peace, but for himself, the man who was to become the inspiration of millions, he was humbly content to make the trodden bond-slaves of his own time know themselves the sons of God, humbly content to say to his own Peter, under circumstances when of all times violence would have seemed excusable, "Thrust back thy sword within its scabbard." Jesus had too much respect for human personality to lay down any law that might bind, but only principles that should liberate, initiative. Jesus did not remain in this world to establish either for the timorous mob of his own day or for the timorous materialists of our day that social order which shall provide greater opportunity for the develop-

ment of the soul than of the salesman. Jesus revealed in his own personality how fearless men might be if only they believed that the spirit animating their bodies is the spirit not of beast, but of God—and then he left men free to build, or not to build, the Kingdom of Heaven.

It sometimes appears as if all the words that Jesus himself spoke and all the words that others wrote of him have at one time or another served to obscure both him and their meaning for humanity. And yet words appear to be the sole human invention for which Jesus showed any respect. He reverenced words for their power to transmit and to stimulate human achievement, and yet at the same time he perceived the power of words to conceal and to annul, and so he intrusted his message not alone to language, but also to another medium, less fallible, less subject to death and decay. For human inventions, other than words, Jesus had scant time and attention, for the purpose of his career was to give life and to give it more abundantly, and he perceived that human in-

ventions may or may not give life to the soul in its hungry ascent. On one occasion when people tried to point out to him the splendors of temple architecture, he turned away impatiently. We can fancy his turning away with the same impatience if we moderns tried to impress him with our own proudest achievements in organization or in machinery. Suppose we took him, the rustic Nazarene, to the Stock Exchange, and exhibited the miracle of an organization ramifying to every corner of the planet. In comment Jesus would use transient words, the words of our own transient day, but we all know what they would be. He would ask, "And all this for money?" Or suppose we should take this ignorant Galilean carpenter to visit a modern battleship, epitome of all inventive skill, embodying the work of myriad hands, the imagination of myriad brains, we know what words Jesus would use. He would ask, "And all this for destruction?"

Of human inventions Jesus reverences only words, and therefore in so far as they might serve, he committed himself to their keeping.

Jesus, who always first yielded to death and then conquered it, submitted to all the accidents of mortal dissolution, of which one of the most potent is the decay of language, its constant impotence to express the thought of one age to another. The very familiarity of phrases, the falsity and indignity with which they have been forced to support some contentious human opinion, have helped to bury Jesus. But it should be the effort of every man who believes Jesus alive, to realize the full force of creative ability Jesus can pour into words, and to free him from the cerements of dead terms, and thus, each man for himself, to reanimate all Scripture. For every one of us who goes to the four gospels to listen, for himself, to the street preacher from Galilee, words shall either entomb Jesus or enshrine him. Although the whole historical career of Jesus is recorded only in the cramped, stammering language of four tiny, ancient pamphlets, and although that language has been wrenched and twisted to fit the ephemeral creeds and justify the compromised conduct of every age that has followed,

still to-day for each of us who stands and listens, one among that eager, humble crowd in old Jerusalem, there shall forever spring forth, living, from that ancient record, the portrait of humanity's one fearless man.

Chapter VI: The Supernormal, Its Relation to Faith

To study the words of Jesus from the point of view of his contemporary audience is the surest way to appreciate their universal meaning for all audiences and all times. In like manner the surest way to appreciate the eternal significance of the events recorded in the gospels is to look at them first in their contemporary setting. A man must avoid the two long telescopes set up for his use, one by theology, one by science, and go back alone to the year A.D. 30, and observe at close range for himself the acts of Jesus. Such disregard of guidance has its perils, but when one gazes at the present chaos of all opinion, and at the obvious fallibility and the real paucity of all leadership, there seems no choice but to puzzle out for oneself the path to belief. The present

screaming of controversy from pulpit to pulpit wins no converts to Christ. One turns away to the summons of a calmer voice that speaks across the centuries, "Follow me." As I try to struggle past the obstacles set in my way both by the church and by science, and somehow come near enough to listen to that low authoritative voice, I have no pride of self-assurance or originality. Many, many men throughout twenty centuries must have found the same path and have described it far better than I shall do, and yet to-day that path is curiously obscured. Here in this book I define humbly enough the reasons for my own faith, with no purpose but perhaps here and there to stimulate some other puzzled mind to make its own adventure. I am saying only, "This is what I believe, and this is why I believe it." I am not asking of a creed theory, but guidance, not is it believable, but is it livable? Jesus alone among religious teachers dares to postulate, "My teaching is something no one can believe until he has tried it."

It is the so-called supernatural elements in the career of Jesus that have always presented

the greatest difficulties to modern minds. Supernatural events are narrated in the gospels in language so naïve as to be almost incomprehensible to present-day science. What opinion is it possible for a thinking man to hold in regard to the four questions: Was Jesus a myth or a man? Did he, or did he not, perform miracles? Was his birth natural or supernatural? Did he, or did he not, manifest himself after death?

Was Jesus a Myth or a Man?

It is very easy, very plausible to relegate Jesus to the region of myth, and then go blithely on one's way, unabashed by his disconcerting mystery. The quickest way to get rid of Jesus is to call him a myth, but this method of burial has proved no more effectual against his resurrection than the method of the Pharisees, or of Pilate, or of the Jewish mob. The burial of Jesus as a myth is unsuccessful so long as there is any man left anywhere to ask of his own brain, If Jesus was not divine, then how account for whatever man was divine enough to invent him?

It is just as difficult for history to prove any Jew of the first or second century capable of inventing such a character, as it is for psychology to prove that any man of any century has ever been capable of creating a Jesus. It is not so easy for men to create a god as some men seem to think. It is true that the idea of incarnation is so old as to antedate history and so widespread that there is only one race that has never had it. Jesus was a man, Jesus was a Jew; in mentality, in spirituality, Jesus was a Jew. How can any fanatic ever forget that Christianity is of the Jews? It is a strange and most arresting anomaly that while the Jewish race furnished the individual for the incarnation, the Jewish race, alone among races, has never admitted the possibility of incarnation, or of demigod or hero. So revolting to the Hebrews were all such conceptions as they observed them among their pagan neighbors, that they never permitted in their plastic arts any representation of beast-forms, much less of the human body. From Joseph to Rabbi Wise, no man of Jewish creed has ever believed that Jehovah has ever manifested himself in

human shape. For the faith-builder it is matter for profound conjecture that Jesus should have appeared from among a nation that alone among all nations has never believed in any incarnation, and that he should have appeared at a time and in an environment when of all times and of all places in history men were least equipped with the imagination or the spiritual vigor necessary for inventing a god. It is true that many races have pictured their gods in mortal form, but never the Jews. It may also be true that certain individual men at certain times have conceived of a god in human flesh, but never such men as Peter and John.

To other peoples of the New Testament era the conception of incarnate deity was familiar enough. The Romans became degraded enough to worship their emperor, while all through Greek literature, the gods step in and out of human semblance as naturally as men put on and off a garment. The difference between Greek and Jew is conspicuous in the New Testament narrative itself. So alien to Jewish thought was all idea of god-man that even

after three years of intimacy with Jesus, in the last hour of their association with him, his disciples are still grossly unaware of his true nature. The Hebrews had so much reverence for God, so little reverence for man, that they could not conceive any man as divine. But the Greeks had so little respect for their gods, so much respect for men, that they were ready in an hour to call Barnabas Jupiter and Paul Mercury. So repulsive was all idea of incarnation to the Jewish people, to every one of them, from high priest to lowest slave, that there was not a dissenting voice when a man was crucified for the blasphemy of calling himself God's son. If one looks straight at the historic conditions of Jesus's death, can one possibly believe that men to whom all thought of incarnation was repugnant, men who in addition were feeble, humble, doubtful, at the mercy of the powerful who had killed their master, men in all the bewilderment and grief of a lost cause and their leader's execution, should within six weeks' time be preaching in an ecstasy of courage and conviction stagger-

ing for any honest student of history to explain, that Jesus is the son of Jehovah?

Now time is an absolutely indispensable element in all myth-making. Myth is always slowly formed, gathering accretions gradually from vague, folk-lore sources. As I tried to show a few pages back, the gospel narrative was not separated from its events by that lapse of years that rationalists take for granted. According to biblical scholarship as unimpeachable in its fearless research as that of any scientist, the gospel account, first spoken, then written, was almost contemporary with the occurrences it records. No man was ever made into a god overnight, especially no man who had just undergone the public ignominy of a criminal's execution. It must be remembered that the mob fury against Jesus was due to disappointment in him. For generation after generation a people snarling in bitter slavery had fed their bafflement on the expectation of a national deliverer. But the promise of deliverance had dissolved into a madman's talk of an unearthly kingdom, and an unearthly forbearance. It was not his alien executioners but

his own countrymen who ringed the cross of Jesus with their foul upbraidings. Even his friend Cleopas reflects the prevailing mood of utter disillusion when he says, "But we were hoping that it was he who was about to ransom Israel." People in such a mood as followed the death of Jesus do not at once proceed to make a god out of a felon!

The innate attitude of the Jewish people toward all incarnation, and their aggravated hostility to it in the period immediately following Jesus's death, are arguments reached by a study of past history, but for a man who would build his faith stone by stone from the bottom up, the argument not from past history, but from universal psychology, has the greater weight. The men who gave the world the story of Jesus were men as incapable of inventing him as they were of adequately describing him. Legend is invariably garrulous; myth is invariably extravagant. Actual myth-making, as, for example, it may be studied in the civilization of Egypt or of India, often shows aspiration, but always shows anthropomorphism. In so far as myth reveals the

desire of man to have a god, it is noble and ennobling—but in all genuine myth there can be seen also the Caliban desire to be a god. Myth is always fantastic and endlessly inventive. The stark brevity and simplicity of the gospels is as alien to myth as day to night. Every myth-made god betrays some element of grossness; the naked sublimity of the Galilean Jesus still transcends every human ideal. Cynical and pagan as we are, still, with Pilate, we can find in him no fault at all. It is not for any imperfection in Jesus that we still, like Pilate, consent to his killing. Against Pilate, the man he condemned offered no violence, uttered no reproach, but, obviously, Pilate had the best of reasons for being afraid of him.

If the disciples of Jesus were myth-makers and erected a god out of a mere man, clearly they did so either with intentional falsehood or without it, for there was no time for the ordinary growth of folk-legend. History shows that the conception of Jesus as a god-man was complete, essentially unchanged from then to now, within a few months of his death. Therefore either Jesus was exactly such an

actual person as his biographers reveal him, or those biographers, humble, untaught, ignorant men, got together, and with the most subtle and skillful collaboration presented to the world the highest ideal of humanity ever known to man. Yet those men seem of all men the least capable of any imaginative achievement whatsoever. And there is a deeper argument to be answered. Men capable of imagining such perfection are not instantly and at the same time capable of lying. Inconceivable sublimity in one region of a man's soul, and basest deception in another, is a psychological phenomenon flatly impossible. He is a blind and flimsy faith-builder who disregards the simple facts of human character as both history and his own common sense reveal them to him. For myself, the whole question of the mythical element in the gospel narrative receives illumination from the fact of the thirty hidden years. Before we call the gospel writers mere myth-makers, before we call Jesus a mere miracle-monger, we should take into account the psychology of all myth-makers and of all miracle-mongers. If any one of these four biographies had been

fabricated, the tale of those thirty years of obscurity would have been filled with inventions. To me, none of the miracles Jesus is said to have performed is so convincing as the fact, unquestioned by anyone, that during thirty years he refrained from performing any. No myth-maker could have kept himself silent, no miracle-monger could have kept himself humble, for thirty years. If the evangelists did not consciously deceive the world, the alternative is clearly that with the uttermost truthfulness that was in them they tried to depict the unprecedented personage they had known, telling what their own eyes had seen, what their own ears had heard, what their own hearts had felt, and, in the last gospel of all, what their own brains had thought—telling it all so unaffectedly that for the world to-day the man portrayed stands forth as direct and challenging as in the day when his disciples saw and heard and knew him.

Of the four gospels it is the last that has been oftenest dismissed as fabricated. Jesus never existed, not the Jesus of John; John made him up, so scholars have often said. The

Jesus of John is so beautiful as to be unbelievable—therefore some man invented him! That "therefore" is to my mind the most astounding *therefore* in the whole history of human reasoning! Suppose we should grant the inconceivable premise that any man capable of inventing such sublimity could at the same time have been capable of foisting a fabrication upon the world, there still stands before my faith this dilemma: since it is impossible for my reason to believe any human man capable of inventing the God-man Jesus, then I must either accept and reverence the Jesus of John or I must believe John himself, by virtue of so divine a conception, a God-man and reverence him.

Did Jesus Perform Miracles?

Agnosticism finds it as easy to dismiss the miracles as to dismiss the man, as being both alike legendary. Such dismissal is seductively easy, but there are certain characteristics of the miracles of Jesus that prevent my brain from disregarding them. I am keenly aware how curiously superstitious I must appear to

my agnostic friends in my frank respect for the miracles. In every period, for any individual to associate with Jesus has meant some sacrifice of caste. Imagine asking a Harvard senior of to-day to associate intimately with a Jewish carpenter two thousand years dead! It is never a light matter to incur the scorn of one's companions. It is no light matter to-day for a minister to come out boldly for Jesus as he sees him. Not to look at Jesus for oneself is to deny him resurrection, and yet for any man of us to permit the tomb of Jesus to remain sealed may be to risk as heavy a responsibility toward his fellows as Pilate risked twenty centuries ago. Although I write as a mere layman, not to be called to the bar by any bishop or presbytery, still I know clearly what it means for any man like me, one to be roughly catalogued as belonging to the intellectuals, to look his friends in the eyes, appreciating all their controlled pity and astonishment, and confess, "Yes, I believe that Jesus turned water into wine; yes, I believe Jesus raised the dead to life." Yet, even from the point of view of people whose opinions are diametric to my

own, I cannot see how anyone can observe the present-day miracles of chemistry, physics, biology, and escape the surmise that the miracles of Jesus may at any time be duplicated and explained by modern science. Jesus, like many another man in history, may have been merely in advance of his time in employing for his use laws that he made no attempt to expound. It is quite possible to believe that men may at some future date be able to explain all the miracles of Jesus, but there will still be left the superhuman task of explaining him. Now while I believe in the miracles, I find it a little hard on my self-respect as a reasoning man, that anyone should suppose that I believe in Jesus because of the miracles!

It sometimes appears to me that those who most scorn the miracles have never read the gospels carefully enough to discover how Jesus himself scorned them and the people who demanded them. Faith, a spiritual function, should not have a material basis; faith becomes holy in exact proportion as it becomes free of all physical foundation. No one perceived this profound truth more clearly than Jesus him-

self. Jesus possessed a unique power over matter, a power which perhaps other men may some day attain, but the power of Jesus over spirit will remain forever solely his own. Jesus himself had precisely the same revulsion that the modern man feels at the idea of making faith dependent on any physical manifestation. Looking at the little circle of his friends, and desiring for them the holiest form of faith, and gazing down the vista of the coming centuries at all the obstacles that should stay his advance, Jesus employed his supernormal power with reluctance and with sad prevision that it would prove a stumbling block in all thoughtful approach to him. Jesus had, however, his reasons for his miracles, and it is not the miracles, but the reasons, that have an essential revelation of the character of Jesus. A man might turn water into wine, but there is no logical connection between such an action and nobility of soul. A Hindu juggler might perform such legerdemain, but it would be for a substantial reward; he could hardly be expected to lend all the resources of his art for anything so trivial as the relief of a host's embarrassment at a tiny

village merrymaking. Nor is there any essential spiritual significance in bringing the dead to life. I can perfectly well imagine a devil raising a dead man to life for purposes of his own, but I cannot imagine a devil doing it with the sole purpose of restoring a boy to his heart-broken mother. It is because of the motives shining through his signs and wonders that there is in Jesus always majesty and never necromancy.

I frankly admit that there are some few miracles that are puzzling because they appear meaningless, but in the flooding light of the beauty and significance of all the others, I can only feel that the account of the cursed fig tree and of the Gadarene swine must have been reported by observers who had entirely missed the most important details. Not that two or three miracles should have suffered in transmission, but that the great majority should have come down to us with such a wealth of background and of import, is the remarkable thing. Not only did Jesus have in view the universal significance of the particular miracle, but as often as he could hold his audience to

the necessary attention, he expounded that meaning in unforgetable words, so that, in his sure handling, the miracles become not crude attempts to coerce a crude faith, but rich symbols of spiritual truth; so handled, the miracles become parables, not spoken, but acted.

To the end of time people will be questioning whether or not Jesus was God, inhabiting for a brief time a human body. For the establishment of his divinity his signs and wonders have always furnished a two-edged argument. Discussion has been fallible because it has concentrated on the mere fact rather than on the manner of the performance. Whether or not Jesus was God, he performed his miracles, not as a man, but as God would have performed them. Jesus possessed a unique power over matter; whether or not that power was superhuman, the occasions when he refrained from using it show a superhuman self-denial, and the occasions when he used it show a superhuman pity. It is not the times when Jesus performed miracles, but the times when he forbade himself to perform them that reveal his divinity, and at the same time reveal the fiercest

and most constant temptation of all his short flaming passage across earthly history. Suppose Jesus had chosen to turn stones into loaves of bread, suppose he had chosen to rule all the world in obedience to the law of money rather than to the law of mercy, suppose he had chosen to cast himself from the temple pinnacle, suppose he had chosen to call down legions of angels against his murderers—would he have in the world to-day one worshiper? Our instant answer to that question is sufficient argument to show that it has never been the power of the miracles, but rather its manner of employment, that has influenced people to reverence Jesus.

So long as the miracles are for anyone mere signs and wonders, they engender either incredulity or superstition. It is not until we follow Jesus, the healer, from village to village, observing him, listening to him, that some witness deep within us cries, If God ever actually inhabited human flesh, precisely in this way would he have worked miracles. If God had chosen for a time to submit to every law he himself had imposed upon men for their

growth, then he would never have broken any of the lesser laws that govern our development, except in obedience to some higher law ordained for our emancipation. He would break the physical order only for the sake of revealing the spiritual order. God, walking the world, would know the peril of passing into history as a wonder-worker. But the miracles reveal an irrepressible kindness, bursting through all self-imposed restrictions. Jesus could conquer temptation and refrain from saving himself, but he could not refrain from saving others. Divine tenderness broke through the control he might have imposed upon his human hands, and coerced them to heal. But, always, divinely prescient, he foresaw the price he would have to pay in terms of doubt. He saw that to give life to the actual dead boy on the sheeted bier might be to conceal his gift of eternal life from future generations, for within a week people might be denying the act as a legend or a lie. But Jesus, looking far ahead into the eyes of his unborn comrades, hoped that there would always be those who would see not the mere marvel, but the burn-

ing pity back of it, and that these would not believe in the man because of his miracles, but in the miracles because of the man.

When I try to imagine exactly what would be the effect on my own creed of Christ if the miracles were deleted from the gospel narrative, I discover, as one by one I think them over, that the loss of each would leave a curious gap. I try to disbelieve the raising of Lazarus, and I find my first thought is that then I should never again hear Jesus saying to every grief-stricken mourner, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." I try to disbelieve the healing of the blind beggar, and I realize how I should miss those robust satiric words, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." Deprived of that story, I should miss also its emphasis on Jesus's superiority to a man-made Sabbath and to all man-made ecclesiasticism. Denying that incident, I should deny myself the privilege of observing Jesus always accomplishing his task of recreation, transcending human times and seasons, as does God. I try to disbelieve the feeding of

the five thousand in the wilderness, and I feel how barren my conception of the world's Christ would become if I could no longer hear him asserting, "I am the bread of life." Thus I find that for myself the miracles are so inextricably intertwined with their significance that I cannot see at what point I could separate their physical aspect from their spiritual import, and the spiritual import of the miracles, I discover, is one of the firmest stones on which my faith is founded. As a mere exercise of credulity it is easier for me to believe that Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb, than to believe that any merely human man, standing before all the mystery of death, and facing all the tragedy of grief, could have conceived of asserting, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Jesus, I believe, performed no act in his brief earth-life that could not serve to all eternity as an example and an incentive for the spiritual life of his followers, but to vitalize our imitation of Jesus it is necessary for us to incorporate the inner motive of his deeds rather than their external manifestation. Jesus's acts, like his words, were necessarily subject to his

contemporary setting, and so neither words nor acts can always be literally translated into the terms of later times. But the motives in which Jesus expressed himself have always been translatable into the ideals of every succeeding century. Jesus achieved wonders of healing by the laying on of hands. Medical science achieves its wonders to-day, but by no methods so immediate. Its technique is the fruit of long years of devotion, and of sacrifice sometimes of life itself. It is in terms of such selfless dedication to science that the ideals of the last hundred years have been expressed. Psychology as well as medicine has by the same slow laborious methods achieved to-day its wonders of healing. Now I could not believe in God at all if I did not believe that all human aspiration obeys a divinely ordered evolution, making the ideals of every age purposeful for God's plans. There is no wastage in God's schemes, and, therefore, the sternly scientific conscience of our era must have its import for our emerging destiny. The events of history may repeat themselves, but the ideals of each period are its own, and never to be despised without some

loss to that period of its characteristic energy and resource. The idealism peculiar to our own era is scientific, but so basic and universal is the idealism of Jesus, that there has never been and will never be an era whose characteristic idealism could not be energized and recreated by his. This is the line of argument by which I arrive at my attitude toward the current interest in spiritual therapy.

The crux of the discussion is whether or not the church of to-day has inherited, in literalness, Jesus's power to heal. If so, it becomes incumbent on Christian clergy and on Christian sects to imitate the method of Jesus's miracles, expectant of his results. Common sense would admit at once that there are many disorders curable by purely spiritual methods, but in such a matter as smallpox the common sense of the common law would surely intervene with its purely physical methods, and the most devoted Christians among us would accord it our approval. The most agnostic of doctors would probably grant that, whatever the disease, a patient is materially benefited by a conviction of God's presence and of God's desire for

recovery. What the agnostic doctor would not grant is that the doctor himself would be more benefited than the patient if he were actuated by those same convictions. Never, as I survey the long, painful progress of humanity, am I able to believe that any process so intelligent was shaped by chance, but if not by chance, then by God; there is no other alternative, and if our climb is God-directed, then there is purpose in the present-day reverence for science, and to deny science its exercise is to frustrate that purpose. God needs doctors or he would not have made them. Of all men walking this earth at this hour, doctors have the opportunity of following closest in Christ's footsteps, for he was himself first a doctor, and never dreamed of preaching to a broken soul until he had restored its broken body. Jesus healed by methods that from the perspective of two thousand years appear inexplicable, and for that reason hardly to be safely adopted by modern men. But shining clear and splendid for all time stand forth the motives of the miracles. In regard to the miracles of Jesus, as in every other aspect of his career, his own

words ring forever true, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The spirit of Jesus's miracles is starkly lucid; he burned to relieve suffering, he sought to emancipate souls from physical crippling, and he wished to establish faith in himself and his message. Such faith, he plainly saw, was not of the highest type, but could serve as starting point for growth. It is the spirit, not the letter, of his signs and wonders, that Jesus bequeathed to his followers. Whenever any man perceives back of the blazing pictorial language of Jesus, and back of his vivid dramatic actions, the inner significance of both, and makes that universal significance the object of his imitation, he is able to translate those words and actions into terms of his own decade and its own idealism, and thus to become personally energized for that individual spiritual adventure which is a condition of all racial progress. Just in proportion as a present-day scientist permits himself and his miracles to be inspired by that faith in God and that tenderness to man which characterized the miracles of Jesus, shall the promise of Jesus be made true in

terms of our own time—"The works that I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these shall ye do."

To me the one miracle beyond any peradventure of dispute that Jesus commanded men to perform is that of creating ourselves in his image—and this we cannot do until faith reveals clearly that the miracle of his personality is the supreme miracle that explains and transcends all other miracles.

Was His Birth Natural or Supernatural?

As I endeavor, humble and puzzled, to thread my way to conviction through all the disputing and denying going on all about me, I discover one sure rock from which vantage I can always obtain perspective: I do not try to believe anything more than Jesus himself asks me to believe. As one looks at the present fulminations of the press, it appears as if the Christian church might be torn in two by controversy over the manner of Jesus's birth, and in all the noisy recrimination few people offer the quiet advice, "Look and see what Jesus himself says of his birth." To look

would be to find that Jesus says not one single word. Had he no reason for his reticence? Does Jesus mean us to follow his example here and there, imitating this or that characteristic that attracts us, or does he mean us to follow it in all things? As a matter of fact we have always showed ourselves foolhardy and perverse in picking and choosing just which qualities in Jesus to accept and which to reject. As to the manner of his human birth, Jesus was absolutely silent. If we truly reverence him, are we not bound to reverence that silence, whether or not we understand it?

There is a swift way to test controversy if ever it grows noisy within our own brains, and if to-day press and pulpit would stop shouting long enough to listen, they, too, could hear the tones of Jesus, low, ironic, speaking always his clear solution. It is curious how instantly we know Jesus's attitude toward any question, know it absolutely for one visioned moment before we turn away to argue and obscure it. This instancy of ours is the spontaneous witness of our whole character to the wholeness of his. Contrasted with this crystal-clear re-

sponse of our personality to his, all contentious approach to him is a path dark with human sophistry and compromise. On this question of his birth, a question now so bitterly mooted, which of us cannot hear Jesus speaking? For shall reverence ever assert that the accents of Jesus were silenced two thousand years ago, or ever deny that his most authentic speech has always been expressed not in words, but in terms of human aspiration? While his temples are clamorous with dogma, Jesus speaks in a different language: "If the manner of my birth had been an essential of faith, I would have told you plainly, for nothing needful for your knowledge or your worship did I neglect to tell you. Of my birth I never spoke, but I called myself the Son of Man. I came and went on earth as Joseph's son, contented. Did I ever demand that any man follow me out of deference to my birth? Look and see what it was I did demand, and be silent."

To neglect Jesus's example in any respect may be to frustrate his purpose, a purpose revealed only to those who try in every respect

to imitate his conduct as the only way to ascertain his creed. Whenever we require of faith more than Jesus requires of it, we impose a human fetter upon a divine spontaneity, and thus distract ourselves from the real requirements designed perhaps to carry us to some far unguessed emancipation. For any man to ask of his fellow-men more than Jesus himself asks is a curious assumption of pride, and the distance from pride to persecution is only a hair's breadth. Those who were nearest to Jesus in his earth life did not preach about his birth; they preached about his resurrection. It might be well for the Christian church of the twentieth century to look at the Christian church of the first, and surmise what would have happened to our faith if the earliest Christians had preached of the babyhood rather than of the manhood of Jesus. It really seems as if in the ecstasy of that risen presence standing beside them, Peter and Paul completely forgot the birth of Jesus.

Jesus had, I am forced to believe, some divine reason for not basing his divinity on any physical phenomenon. He bases it on the spon-

taneous tribute of our personality to his. His eminence is divine, he never stooped to make it merely superhuman. The most courageous and most symbolic incident of his claim to Messiahship is that of the synagogue of Nazareth. Joseph's son, the town carpenter, faces the people who have known him from infancy. His figure is as familiar and as little noted as the stones of the fountain where they go for water. Their soiled feet have trod the door sills he has fashioned, their grimy hands have lifted from their sweaty oxen the yokes that he has made. But now he stands before them, their fellowman suddenly transfigured into a mystery. For the first time in his life the eyes of all are upon him. With a gesture of majesty, their carpenter selects from all their literature of prophecy the holiest hope of all, and reads it aloud. Calmly as a king might lift his hand, he returns the papyrus roll to its custodian and announces, "To-day is this Scripture fulfilled before your very eyes."

And at first, before dispute and doubt can enter them, their response to the divinity of his presence is instant, "For every man of them

accorded him belief, and astounded at the beauty of the words that proceeded from his lips, kept saying, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' "

But presently as he passed on to those austerities of faith that he demands of his followers, his audience flashed from reverence into scorn, they hurtled him forth from their worship, and would have killed the Christ who had dared to be the town carpenter, but then, as now, Jesus passed through the mob that rejected him, deathless God.

It is in the light of that incident that I endeavor to find my way through the controversy of the present. But while I try to make my own path lucid, I hesitate to trespass upon ground that for many people is too holy for any approach. To any man for whom the literal acceptance of the first and second chapters of Matthew and of Luke is essential to a belief in the divinity of Jesus, I can only say, nothing is farther from my intention than mere dispute. I can only repeat that for myself I might be to-day as utterly ignorant of the story of his nativity as were his fellow-

townsmen, and still I should be convinced that the carpenter-Christ is God.

There are lines of demarcation between modernist and fundamentalist that go deeper into human psychology than any mere words or mere argument. If the church of Jesus is to be his in spirit as well as in letter, is it not possible for fundamentalist and modernist to stand together, since both alike accept his divinity? To believe him God's son and to live in accordance with this belief are all that Jesus demands of his friends. Shall the Christian church ask more than that of its members? For the pitiful aspect of the dissension is that always to demand of each other requirements Jesus never made, is to neglect the requirements he does make. For every Christian who insists that his fellow Christian shall believe Christ entered the world in a certain manner, there is somebody somewhere who, listening to the un-Christ-like wrangling of Christians, refuses to believe that Christ ever entered the world at all. While we loudly insist that Jesus was born under conditions that argue the direct intervention of God, we permit babies to be

born under conditions that argue the direct intervention of the devil. Will it never enter our foolish heads to see that Jesus himself made reverence for all humanity the first condition of reverence for his divinity?

The basic differences between fundamentalist and modernist are psychological rather than doctrinal. Obviously the first distinction is the eternal one between the conservatism of the mass and the adventure of the individual. Conservatism is just as essential to all sure progress as is adventure. There will always be many sound and sturdy men and women who will never be able to put through their day's task vigorously except as they feel that they have the age-old authority of church and state to reinforce their own thinking and acting. Unfortunately to-day all authority is being most cruelly sifted, and people who refuse to think for themselves run the risk of being trampled before the advance of new and strange opinions.

The difference between fundamentalist and modernist runs deeper, however, than the cleavage between conservatism and audacity. To

the fundamentalist it is inconceivable that there can be a union of divinity with humanity except by the direct physical effect of the spirit of God upon the body of a woman, but to the modernist the incarnation is too stupendous a fact to be circumscribed to the human conception of a superhuman event. Neither biologist nor chemist has ever yet explained how the life principle everywhere in evidence is able to impregnate physical matter. So long as that daily miracle goes unexplained, the miracle of an immaculate conception is defensible. Recognizing the miracles of life all about him, the modernist freely grants to the fundamentalist that the physical explanation of Jesus's divinity may be literally true, but for himself, the modernist believes in that divinity for a different reason.

As a builder of my own working creed, my own conclusions are the same as those quoted in a recent copy of the *Expository Times* of Edinburgh that "the story of the Virgin birth is so demonstrably a late intrusion into the life of Jesus, so manifestly legendary in construction and withal so unessential to the Christian

faith, that it has been abandoned by the majority of unprejudiced scholars."

Nothing, however, is farther from my intention than any irreverence toward any faith that is inextricably intertwined with the literal acceptance of chapters divine in their beauty and in their witness to the nature of God and of man. While to my own mind these early chapters are as separate in character from the rest of the gospel story as they are separate in sequence, I freely admit that if they are legendary, their events were conceived by minds so imbued with the character and teaching of Jesus that even legend was coerced to a sublimity in keeping with the sublimity of that deathless presence.

The wordless beasts in their stable, the wordless shepherds, dumb with wonder, the mysterious astrologers from unknown foreign lands, the anthem bursting forth from out the spirit world, all focusing all worship on the miracle of a new-born baby—the narrative of the first Christmas is the most beautiful story of birth ever written. Its sheer simplicity, its utter purity, stagger the intellect to account

for. I frankly envy those who can believe it literally, and yet, for myself, in view of the fact that his nativity is never mentioned by Jesus nor by any of the first preachers of his message, I have come to believe the story profoundly symbolic, making every mother the physical vessel to receive the mysterious gift of life, making every father the steward of that gift, making every baby a holy child. Is it not possible for the fundamentalist to let me regard the story of Jesus's birth in this way? Is this way of regarding it one whit less reverent, less holy, than his own?

It is far easier, it appears to me, for the modernist to understand the attitude of the fundamentalist than for the latter to understand the modernist. In all the controversy, it is the fundamentalist who asks that other men believe as he does, while the modernist merely asks to be allowed to think for himself. The pitiful part of it all is that even if every Christian should this very day cease from every activity that Jesus commanded, and devote himself wholly to argument, not if this argument were continued to the end of time, could

either religion or science, forced to go back twenty centuries, ever establish any proofs to support either side of the contention.

Jesus himself resolutely separated his claims from any proof but that of personal witness to his power. Jesus himself never established his divinity on any foundation so precarious as that of physical miracle. All physical miracle is limited to a date and a place, and therefore will always be disputed by people of a later period and a distant region. But personality is an indestructible argument. Personality, as Jesus embodies it in himself, and as he inspires it in others, is evidence open for anybody's examination in all places and in all times. The incarnation as a physical miracle will always be susceptible to dispute, and the modernist regards it as therefore less energizing than his own. It is one of the noble audacities of present-day thought to believe that faith, in order to have its finest power to spiritualize, should rest on a purely spiritual foundation. Not Jesus's birth, revealed in a book two thousand years ago, but Jesus's character, revealed in

incessant resurrections all about us in the world to-day, is the proof of his divinity.

To dispute at what exact moment in the span of Jesus's earth existence the divine entered into possession of his human body, whether before his birth, or in his babyhood, or in his boyhood, or in his manhood, appears profoundly unessential before the fact of such possession. Does the exact moment of God's entrance into man either make or mar the incarnation? The difficulty for many minds is to account for a sinless man with a human paternity. But possibly the conception of such a possibility is itself divine, possibly only God could have reverenced his creation so deeply as to believe a man, wholly human in every physical way, capable of embodying his own godhead. It is not Jesus who says that babies are conceived and born in sin, although he did say to an old man, a Pharisee, that he needed to be reborn, of the spirit.

This explanation of my faith would be worthless for my own clarification if at any point it should fail to be completely honest. I therefore state frankly that for myself I try

to approach Jesus as his contemporaries approached him. Whatever his reasons, he chose to appear to his friends as the son of Joseph and Mary, a peasant carpenter, one of a large family of brothers and sisters. If there had been any hint of shame about his birth his enemies would have used it against him, whereas the most they find to say of his origin and antecedents is not that these are in any doubt, but that they are too well known, too usual, too normal. It is impossible for me to omit from the foundations of my faith such a passage as that of the seventh chapter of John:

> Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught saying, Ye both know me and ye know whence I am.

For myself I find this stumbling block in the conception of a supernatural birth: as the chief argument for his other miracles is, to me, that they are a revelation of his character, so, contrariwise, to make his birth a miracle would be, for my own path to belief, a denial of his character. As I see Jesus, he is God submit-

ting to every human handicap. Unless he was in all points tempted like as we are, he has no power to help us against temptation. If he did not have an earthly father, he escaped half our patrimony of weakness. To me—merely one man looking at Jesus in history and at Jesus in the world to-day—the god-man stands before us fearlessly and completely human before he dares to assert that he is divine. He bases his divinity not on the manner of his creation, but on his power to recreate us. Whatever his followers, whether right or wrong, have claimed for him, Jesus himself with a humility and with a purpose beyond human imagination chooses to stand before the world, not as impossible, but as the perfection of possibility.

Did He, or Did He Not, Manifest Himself After Death?

Perhaps I have already said too often, or perhaps I have not said often enough, that in this book I am not trying to convince others, but merely trying to make clear, first to myself, and then to those others, the reasons why

I am myself convinced. Facing now the primary article of the Christian creed, I say that I believe in the fact of the resurrection, first because of the effect of that fact on the men of Jesus's own time, and then on the men of our own time. Further, I credit the incidents narrated of Jesus's return not because of the mere miracle, but because of the miraculously consistent motive of each appearance. And as a third reason I believe in the fact of Jesus's resurrection because of its harmony with the facts of an indomitable life energy revealed everywhere in the world around me. The resurrection of Jesus is the cardinal article of the Christian creed, but there is no article for which the gap between creed and conduct has proved so destructive, no article which if permitted its full application might become so potent.

When I say that I believe in the fact because of its effect, I mean that an amazing result implies an amazing cause, and I mean that it is absolutely impossible for my mind to grant that the early disciples were men with the courage to preach or the imagination to invent so sublime a lie as the resurrection of Jesus—if it

was a lie! It appears to be easy enough for rationalists to get rid of the resurrection by saying that the disciples invented it and then went joyously to martyrdom in defense of their own invention, but it is impossible for my own brain to get rid of the resurrection by any such light dismissal. There have been unnumbered instances in history when men chose the stake in defense of what they believed to be the truth, but I fail to recall one instance in which they chose the stake in defense of what they knew to be a lie. Our whole theory of the third degree rests on the premise that no man can endure torture very long unless he has truth to support him, and all protest that such methods of inquisition are fallible rests on the cognate premise that even with truth to support him many a man cannot endure torture, and so to escape it makes a false confession. In saying that the first missionaries invented the resurrection, materialists presuppose for them such a degree of innate courage as I have never yet seen exemplified in any man, dead or living, and for which I can find no scintilla of evidence in the gospel record, and the gospel record

is the only evidence revealing the characters of Jesus's chosen promulgators. It would be pretty hard to prove them before the resurrection as men showing any signs of bravery. Every one of his followers ran away when Jesus was arrested. Two of them came stealing back later, and of those two, one knew himself to be protected by his high connections, and the other, at the first hint of danger to himself, swore that he had never known Jesus. Immediately after the execution of their leader we find the little band huddled behind locked doors in deadly fear. At best they had been only a little group of rustics, bewildered in a cruel city, held together by the force of their master's personality. When he went from them, they were paralyzed by despair and dread. Look at them as the gospels show them —very unusual material out of which to make martyrs! The moment the chroniclers give as the first to illustrate courage is in itself incredible. The disciples have just seen their leader hanging in shameful death. At that moment the most natural thing was that Jesus's words, intrusted to men so craven and doubtful, should

have died with him. Really something must have happened between that midnight when Peter, standing in the flickering firelight and ominous shadows of the high priest's hall, cursed and swore, saying, "I know not this man of whom ye speak," and that morning six weeks later when with the eleven he stood in the hostile streets of Jerusalem and cried, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses!"

The chief argument that Jesus was able to convince his friends of his return to life is that they have been able to convince other people. Unless Jesus survived death during the forty days succeeding his execution, there is no way to account for his surviving death to-day. If Jesus had not risen from the tomb, the Christian church would have died before it was born, at the cross. Jesus exists in this present hour not through the power of myth, nor through the power of miracles, nor because of the manner of his birth. Unless his followers had believed in his restoration to life, we should never have heard of him, for not one sermon would have been preached, not one gospel would have

been written. The resurrection is the only way to account for the Christian faith. Nothing short of Jesus's return from the dead could have transformed the unstable, cowardly fisherman, Peter, the scoffing, cruel Pharisee, Paul, into the most intrepid missionaries known to history. Peter and Paul, before they believed Jesus risen from the grave, may appear fanatic and foolish, but afterward they possess an enigmatic force, as if recreated in a new character. Looked at as they pass down the pages of the chronicle, they do not any longer appear to any honest observer as fanatic or foolish. They seem to have been remade overnight. They appear to possess a blazing eloquence, a keen wit, an invincible joyousness, a tireless energy; above all, they appear to be men enviably fearless.

I believe in the fact of the resurrection because of its effect not alone on the disciples of A.D. 33, but because of the even more enigmatic effect of the resurrection of to-day upon the men of to-day. From A.D. 33 to 1925 the people who have spread the principles of Jesus have been the people who have believed an

actual person, transcending all dissolution, stood beside them. The men who to-day perceive, against all the blackness of despair and bewilderment, the risen Jesus before their very eyes, are to-day his only witnesses, and they are as far outnumbered as were Peter and Paul among the shifty, cynical Greeks, among the sturdy, cynical Romans. Always it is the utter audacity of such believers that wins attention, their audacity and their astounding joyousness, like that of flowers, bubbling up golden through black winter soil. Always the men who are themselves convinced of Jesus's resurrection, convince, not because of what they say, but because of what, in the emancipation of that belief, they have become.

To preach Jesus at all in that period immediately following the resurrection, a period black with the animosity both of Jews and of Gentiles, required a bravery to which the gospel record gives no previous clue, but those first disciples dared more than merely preach Jesus; they elected out of all the material they had in store precisely that one aspect which of all was least likely to win credence. They not only

dared to preach to a hostile audience, but they dared to preach precisely the fact which that audience was least likely to accept. To the very faces of those Jews and Romans who had just crucified Jesus they blared the news that he had come back from the grave. They made the most difficult tenet in Christian theology the first tenet that all converts must acknowledge, and they made no divergence from this audacious emphasis, as the years went on and the new strange religion made its sure, humble advance from the slave markets and the catacombs up and up until it possessed imperial Rome. There must have been some curious reason why the early Christians made the most difficult article of their faith their one incessant theme. It was a foolhardy practice, and they joyfully paid the price of butchery in the Roman arena. They risked hostility to their creed instantly because they dared to appear as madmen, asserting an absurd, unheard-of phenomenon. There were many milder ways of spreading new doctrine. The Greeks and Romans were not averse to new cults; they liked them, but they liked them to be a little

plausible. They did not enjoy being insulted with impossibilities. Can anyone suppose the compatriots of Pilate or of Juvenal were superstitious people? Can anyone suppose the compatriots of Demetrius, the Ephesian jeweler, or of Lucian, were easily duped? The better one knows the Greeks and Romans, the more congenially modern do they appear. They were not one bit readier to believe that a man can return to life from death than we are to-day. If the first missionaries had so chosen, they could anywhere throughout the blasé pagan world have found an audience as willing to listen pleasantly and politely to the Sermon on the Mount, as Chicago to-day, in a comfortably upholstered temple, would listen to Bahaism. If the first Christians had not insisted on asserting incredible events, they would not have been thrown into the arena; they would have been invited to dine. But instead, always and everywhere, in season and out, as the first fact and the last of their religion, they taught the resurrection. It is very hard for my common sense to believe that such courage and

such pertinacity could exist in men debilitated by the consciousness that they were lying.

Deception, however, it can be instantly suggested, may not be conscious, may not be culpable. The disciples merely experienced hallucination. An easy solution of a strange mystery, but a solution too quick and plausible for my own acceptance. Mary and Peter, and then two men together, and eleven men together, and five hundred men together, all at different times and in different places, had all of them exactly the same hallucination, saw, all of them, exactly the same person? And the effect on every several beholder was precisely the same —no panic, no hysteria. They seem each to pass at the instant of recognition into a new condition of being, utterly emancipated by the peace and joy and energy of their conviction. It is argued in support of the hallucination theory that the disciples of Jesus expected his return from the grave, and, being in a state of expectation, easily believed the impossible. Carefully studying the mood of the disciples, I can find no smallest evidence that they ever dreamed that Jesus would come back from the

dead. Jesus promised again and again that he would rise on the third day, but I can discover no sign that his disciples understood the words. They seem, like many other of his sayings, to have touched their ears, but not their understanding. The despairing group portrayed at the last meal together, the trembling band gathered on the evening of the first Easter, Mary blind with tears at the sepulcher, Cleopas and his friend utterly disconsolate in their bewilderment—it is extremely difficult to visualize any of these as hopeful and expectant! There were people who had listened when Jesus said he would return, had listened and remembered, but these were hardly people to spread a report of his restoration. While his friends show no sign that they heard or remembered Jesus's promise to come back to them, the crafty Pharisees took precautions to have the tomb sealed. It was, of course, not the resurrection of his body but of his influence that they feared. History has justified their fear!

There are certain aspects of the hallucination hypothesis which make it for my own mind singularly difficult to receive. There is some-

thing unique in any hallucination in which two men at once, or eleven men at once, or five hundred men at once, see exactly the same person. To do this the two men, or the eleven, or the five hundred would have to have precisely the same mental receptivity, and that receptivity at that moment would have to be, among all of them, at precisely the same degree of vigor. Such ideal conditions seem to me unthinkable. The possibility is sometimes advanced that, granted not all the men of a given group actually beheld the vision of their risen master, one or two of them did imagine they saw him, and the contagion of their fancy spread to all the rest, by thought transference pure and simple. It is always a surprising thing for my own sense of logic that any materialist should ever employ for any purpose whatever the argument of telepathy. In the first place, the existence of telepathy is not yet admitted by science; it is generally granted that sound-waves or light-waves traveling through the air may carry information from one man to another, but there is no general admission that thought-waves can do this. Thought transference is

debatable ground, therefore by its very etymology forbidden for the use of debate. In the second place, as has been shown by Frederic Myers, if telephathy should ever become an accepted fact, it would invalidate all the foundations of materialist philosophy, because the moment you admit non-physical communication between any two minds, you open up the possibility of other non-physical activities for all minds, and approach the perilous hypothesis of a complete non-physical existence for any mind. Obviously if you once admit that an intelligence is able to *act* independently of its physical mechanism, you at once suggest that it might be able to *exist* independently of its physical mechanism. The foundation of materialism is that the spirit cannot live without a body. On this premise, Jesus, after death, could not have manifested himself to his friends. Materialists, therefore, deny the resurrection, but explain it as an hallucination. So long as they restrict themselves solely to the hallucination theory, I grant their position comprehensible, but the moment they overstep, and introduce the possibility of thought

transference, I deny their right to this argument. For myself, I find the whole hypothesis of an illusion—an illusion fondly credited and widely disseminated—untenable because I do not believe there has ever been hallucination so powerful as to create cowards into heroes in six weeks' time, and so enduring as to persist in its effect throughout all the centuries required to establish a new religion in a hostile environment—a religion so naïve as to appear on the surface, repellently superstitious, a religion so exacting in actual practice as to be, both to the pagan world and our own, always repellently austere. I know no way to account for the fact that the Christian faith is still alive to-day after all the death blows of two thousand years, except by the fact that its founder rose from death to life two thousand years ago.

Believing in the fact of the resurrection primarily because of the effect of that fact, I cannot believe that men who were either guilty of conscious deceit, or innocently duped by mere illusion, would ever have had either the bravery or the visioned efficiency required to

establish a new religion, but for another reason also I reject the view that the return of Jesus to life is a fabrication. To make so stupendous a lie convincing would have required great powers of invention and imagination at the start, and afterward the greatest skill and caution to sustain it intact through centuries. Looking at the characters of the disciples as the gospels portray them, I wonder which would be harder to substantiate from the actual account, that they were men by nature courageous enough to preach an impossibility, or men by nature endowed with the imagination to conceive, or the art to paint, those resurrection pictures that have become part of the literary heritage of the world. It may be possible to deny that Jesus rose from the dead, but nobody who has ever read the final chapters of each gospel can ever afterward forget Mary sobbing at an empty tomb, the boy John, kneeling and peering in at grave clothes mysteriously tossed aside, at One seated by a pungent beach fire where fish are broiling, and saying, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Pictures that hung forever in the gallery of the

world's memory. But who conceived such pictures, who painted them? Galilean fisher-folk? Not all the intellect of Athens, not all the art of Florence, has given us pictures that bite into the memory like those!

But the resurrection appearances do not fit together with exactness. You cannot give the incidents of the first Easter Sunday moment by moment, with precision. Do men and women swept by sudden ecstasy of unbelievable joy remember every detail as does a scientist dissecting a brain? Do they gather together afterward in conference and tabulate their data with precision? Or is their impulse to rush forth and shout their gladness to their heart-sick comrades? Liars and fabricators are never so incautious as were the first heralds of Jesus's resurrection. They were incapable of arranging their evidence like a lawyer's brief. They stood forth, blazing with conviction, and flung their unbelievable news into the teeth of their persecutors. If they had remained the deadened cowards they had been, they might have remembered the dusty scholarship that would one day hunt down the discrepancies of their

accounts, but for themselves, they had seen a dead man live, and had themselves become alive.

It is the strange harmony of the resurrection narratives that is far more difficult to explain than their inconsistencies. The disciples were familiar with the extravagant apocalyptic literature popular in their day; if they had invented the return of Jesus, they would naturally have pictured him in a blaze of splendor and power such as they had expected of the Messiah he had once claimed to be. Instead, Jesus returns simply, unobtrusively, a gardener, plodding to his work in the early dawn, a solitary fisherman upon the beach at sunrise, a fellow pedestrian met along the highway on an afternoon's walk—as convincing in his everyday humanness as if he had never tasted death; yet different, in ways hard for his narrators to describe, and harder for students to explain. But always in every incident the same Jesus he had been before. While now he is seen to break or obey physical laws at his pleasure, he never breaks the law of his own personality.

Just as the miracles are credible because of

their spiritual significance, so the resurrection narratives are credible because of their fidelity to the character of Jesus. Not one incident recounted blurs that character by one slightest earthy touch; not one word or action of the risen Jesus is by the slightest stroke out of drawing. Could human invention have accomplished such a feat of sheer artistry as to make the portrait of Jesus after death the absolute complement, down to the tiniest detail, of the portrait of Jesus before death? The two are companion pictures each needing the revelation of the other. To comfort, to inspire, whether before his crucifixion or after, those are the two sustaining motives of Jesus's existence. Those two motives are clear in every one of the resurrection appearances. If men had fabricated the return of a god to earth after being slain, could they have made that god so human? Always the perfect humanity of Jesus, before death and after, shines out as itself superhuman. If men had merely imagined the return of Jesus, surely they would in some incident have betrayed fantasies of miracle and self-display, and grossnesses of mere

might. Instead, the miraculous element in Jesus's resurrection actions is marked by the same divine self-restraint that characterizes his earlier earth-life. Still he walks obedient to two motives—to comfort, to inspire—thus to make men fearless creators of themselves. Remembering a meal which they had eaten together heavy with foreboding, Jesus comes back again to share a meal in joy; remembering one who once had exclaimed, "Let us go with him that we may also die with him," Jesus stretched to Thomas hands healed but still witnessing to sacrificial love; remembering a woman he had once freed from torture, in the mystery of the pulsing dawn he calls her again to hope, in the same sure voice speaking to her by her own name. If the resurrection of Jesus had been the invention of men, he would have been shown as dumfounding his enemies, but that would have been to convince by force and thus to abrogate his method of creation. If the resurrection of Jesus was the invention of God, he would have been shown as reassuring his friends, for that would be to convince by

love, and thus to vindicate his method of re-creating men into his own image.

If Jesus had not come back with the same individuality, there would have been small purpose in his coming back at all. Survival in a new character is not survival, and would have been meaningless for his associates, leaving them bewildered and unawakened. The thought of mere prolongation of existence is not stimulating, but paralyzing, for why struggle as we do for the freedom of our personality, if all of it, in utter wastage, is to be struck from us at the portal of death? If Jesus, coming back to them, had not convinced his despairing friends that the after-existence is one of joyous activity, activity lucid at last and free of handicap, then the influence upon them of his resurrection becomes inexplicable. Endless existence in a barren universe, endless existence in a universe of exhaustless adventure, the difference between the two conceptions is illustrated by the difference between the Lazarus of Andreyev, and the Lazarus of Browning. Jesus's resurrection would never have transformed his followers from craven despair

to uttermost daring if it had not convinced them of two facts, that he was the same friend after death that he had been before, that he was still joyously active in human affairs. His disciples, having seen him, rushed forth fearless and joyful with their tidings, certain that now at last their master walked inseparably beside them, forever unmenaced by death. Jesus's return either as a flickering ghost shape or as a flesh-and-blood actuality would have been nothing if he had not come back with his old tenderness, his old stimulus. Jesus's return could never have motivated his church with an unbelievable energy and kept that church living until to-day if he had not come back to his friends, unquenchably himself.

The consistency of the character of Jesus after death with the character of Jesus before death is the astounding element in the resurrection narrative, utterly surpassing the miracle of physical manifestation. If I accept the miraculous persistence of Jesus's personality, as revealed in incident after incident of ineffable tenderness, then it is as a mere corollary to such marvel that I can credit the phenomena

of his manifestations. As I look at the portrait of Jesus painted in his four brief biographies, it seems to me that his disciples were as incapable of inventing the character revealed after his return as they were of inventing the character revealed before his crucifixion. The welding of the two characters into a perfect unity is, to me, an achievement transcending human power.

There is but one incontrovertible evidence of Jesus's resurrection, but it is the evidence that his church and its members have oftenest denied him. It is the survival of his motives that establishes his own survival. It is his power to vitalize personality that proves the indestructible persistence of his own personality. The mere externalities of the resurrection are nothing as compared with the fact that only by coming back to life himself could he have enfranchised his followers to life. The bitterness with which we argue the validity of the miracles invalidates their motives, the hostility with which we discuss the physical aspect of the incarnation contradicts the divinity of its purpose, and the obstinacy with which we try to

establish the resurrection of Jesus's body denies to him the resurgence of his spirit. Jesus would to-day be lying sealed within the tomb of oblivion if his first followers had sought to win credence by what they said, rather than by what they were. Peter did not testify; he was testimony. Paul did not preach; he was a sermon.

All discussion of the nature of Jesus's risen body is empty, all argument from this that our risen bodies will be precisely like his is futile, for both alike are as incapable of proof as is the exact manner in which Jesus first assumed that body made by his divinity sacredly human. While we dispute with what manner of lips the risen Jesus partook of food and drink, we forget that the words those lips spoke were, "Peace be unto you." While we scrutinize pierced palms and side, we forget that the hands held toward Thomas proved Jesus's gentleness toward honest doubt; while we argue the aspect of Jesus, the gardener, we forget ourselves to speak to the grief-stricken his glad assurance, "Woman, why weepest thou?" All that we need to know in order to recreate ourselves men as fearless as Peter and Paul, Jesus

left established beyond all dispute. The essential fact of his resurrection is that he came back to his friends after burial in a reality so absolute as to transfigure them from dead despair to invincible courage and incredible capacity. The story of Jesus's presence upon earth is a story as yet hardly more than begun. It is as true to-day as it was twenty centuries ago, that his friends are the only authentic witnesses of his resurrection.

Always I am forced to search for evidence in support of my faith not alone in the written testament, but in the larger scripture of life spread all about me, a scripture which like most men I can read only falteringly, and with constant apology to others more confident of their own method of deciphering. As I turn from written Scripture to unwritten, I am further impressed by the superhuman elements in the resurrection account, for it does not seem to me that mere men could have unerringly selected for emphasis precisely those principles best fitted to vitalize an individual, or a creed, or a church. Jesus's resurrection appears to me to be superhumanly conceived because of

its superhuman accord with the laws of life energy to be everywhere observed. Whether viewed symbolically or literally, the story of the nativity has always emphasized the sacredness of all birth, of all life. In like manner the story of the resurrection has always emphasized the indomitability, the indestructibility, of all life.

Evolution is a curiously mooted word, for the people who deny its truth would be put to it to define the term, and the people who accept its truth would be even more puzzled to elucidate its full connotation for their personal philosophy. Yet clearly to formulate for themselves that connotation might perhaps be to discover some light on a path out of chaos toward a creed. For myself, as I gaze far back at the first amœba, and follow from the primordial ooze the slow climb of humanity, up and up, until it attains the multiple thought processes of a Socrates, of a Dante, I seem to watch two principles ceaselessly active—life forever conquering death, and differentiation steadily imposing itself upon the inchoate. Looking back, one sees life again and again

cast down and buried, but always ultimately emergent, in subtler, stranger forms, perhaps, but always active and triumphant. Side by side with the persistence of the life energy one sees its incessant urge to new shapes, so that every leaf, every insect, every animal, every man, stands forth unique, apart from all others. At the far beginning of the climb is mere protoplasm, holding all its pregnant possibilities, and at our end human personality, still perhaps only half emergent, still perhaps only half created. The men and women that we see to-day, the men and women that we are to-day, are perhaps no farther removed from the primordial amœba than from that ultimate man lying still incurled within the womb of human destiny.

It is strange that the word evolution should cause us to look backward toward our origin, rather than impel us to look forward toward our future. If the backward view reveals life forever indestructible and differentiation as the ceaseless principle of that life, then the forward view should reveal unguessed possibilities of those two principles, once we possess

the courage to release their baffled power. If God two thousand years ago, chose to reveal his own soul to the souls of men by incorporating in one individual the full possibilities of human individuality, then it would have been natural that the earth existence of that individual should illustrate and obey the universal laws ordained for human growth. There is no more evidence for the crucifixion than for the resurrection, but no one denies it because, still handicapped as we are by primordial fear, we believe the facts of death and cruelty, but doubt the facts of life and kindness. The history of humanity shows his crucifixion as witness to the beast from which we sprang; his resurrection is witness to the man we shall become.

Chapter VII: The Autobiography of Jesus

THROUGHOUT this book, so far I have been trying to make clear to myself the question, why do I believe in Jesus? There is a second question to make clear, who is this Jesus I believe in? I have no right to state a creed until I have stated its Christ. In the effort to obtain a fresh angle of observation upon an old but ageless subject, I have come to regard the strangely persistent influence of Jesus upon human history as being, in essence, an autobiography.

Why Did Not Jesus Write?

Why did not Jesus write? A magazine article not long ago asked this question. That Jesus could have written, had he so desired, in either Greek or Aramaic, is a fact that becomes

more evident, the more we know of him and of his time. The general illiteracy of Jesus's associates and surroundings is an aspect that has been much overemphasized, and a misconception that present-day scholarship is doing much to correct. Archæological discovery within the last quarter-century has bared authoritatively the everyday life of those everyday people to whose ranks Jesus belonged. To quote one of the foremost contemporary scholars: "The discoveries of Greek papyri made in Egypt in the past twenty-five years, have put into our hands a mass of materials actually contemporary with the New Testament, and written in the common Greek of its day. These private documents—letters, wills, deeds, contracts, petitions, reports, accounts, receipts, and memoranda—throw a flood of light upon New Testament life." If ordinary people in Egypt employed writing for all practical purposes as we employ it to-day, so must the Galileans have done, for Galilee, with all its crudity, was a thoroughfare of the nations, influenced by all contacts. The village carpenter of Nazareth, like the villagers of his contem-

porary Egypt, had all the facilities of writing ready to his hand. Yet Jesus left us no written word. Surely no one can read the gospels and not realize that their hero, that actual historic preacher-carpenter, had a surpassing literary endowment. From more aspects than our feeble sympathies shall ever grasp, Jesus's life is a record of inexorable self-control imposed upon an impetuous nature. The man who instinctively as a homing bird climbed the nearest mountain for prayer, might have left to us what raptured visions of dawnbreak and morning! The man who listened to the wind as to a spirit brushing the ear as it passes from mystery into mystery, might have left us what music of bird-psalm and ocean-anthem! Who can fathom at what cost Jesus forbade himself to be a poet? Dramatist and painter, logician and philosopher, preacher and prophet, why did not Jesus write? Was it because when, just once, he moved his hand to shape written characters on the dust of the pavement, nobody looked at the words?

Only once is Jesus described as writing. The incident is deathless. It occurs early on the

Wednesday morning preceding his execution. Starting before sunrise, he has come in from his night in the suburbs of Bethany to avail himself of that free lecture platform of the temple court. Every moment is precious for that teaching so soon to be silenced. Early as it is, the people have come pouring to him in throngs. Crowded about him, seated there on the pavement, they are not hostile, but breathlessly attentive. For a little while there is no low hiss of whispered hate at the fringe of his audience, for a little while there are no eyes full of mockery meeting his. The hour is sacredly his own. His eyes rest on the towering candelabra set there in the temple court as symbols of the mystery of light. In the quiet of the freshening morning, he feels himself able to sway his hearers to his purpose; in another moment he may safely point from those high candles to himself, and there in the mounting sunshine may speak the words they shall never forget. The blazing announcement is almost on his tongue, "I am the light of the world." Suddenly hoarse cries, stampeding feet, hooting, and there is shoved upon his pri-

vacy a disheveled form, a woman crimsoned with shame and insult, ringed by noisy accusers who hate her as they hate himself. The flow of his speech is clipped as if by a knife, the light wiped from his face as if by a sponge. In utter revulsion at the indecency, at the outrage aimed more at him than at the criminal, Jesus turns away to trace strange words upon the dust of the pavement. The brazen rabble stands over him, insistent for his judgment. Seated as he is, he lifts his head for one glance and one sentence, then again his finger traces words upon the dust.

What words did Jesus write that morning? No one looked at them because everyone was looking at him, and presently they were wiped out by soiled, unheeding feet. Perhaps people failed to note the movement of his finger because they were watching his handwriting as slowly it was shaping upon the faces of those present, upon face after face, each taking the impress of that one sentence, "That man among you who is sinless, let him cast the first stone"—judgment engraved on face after face, beginning with the eldest even unto the

youngest, and last of all inscribed upon the burning forehead of one who heard, "Neither do I condemn you," and went forth, a woman new-made on that new morning.

This incident holds the answer to the question, why did not Jesus write? He has written his autobiography, however, just as actually, just as consciously, as any of the men and women whose printed volumes stand upon our bookshelves. He has definitely chosen to persist not by means of language, but by means of creative influence, by means of successive resurrections of his personality under aspects ever more vital, by means of embodying himself in a multitude of men. Jesus had the same motive for writing his memoirs that every great self-historian has had, namely, to make plain to future generations the principles of his work, philosophy, and conduct, and to draw with his own hand his own portrait for posterity. Men have given the world their own account of themselves because they fought against dying the death of misunderstanding. Yet the greatest of the great have always been too wise to write their own lives, and among

these, Jesus realized most clearly of them all, the reasons why a man's autobiography may forever falsify him, for there is this peril always in depicting oneself, that every one distrusts the self-portrait. If we modern readers doubt the truthfulness of the four men who described Jesus, how much more would we doubt the truthfulness of Jesus if he had described himself! Knowing the weakness of human nature, other men than Jesus have refrained from writing their autobiographies, but knowing the strength of human nature, Jesus wrote his autobiography with confidence. With the sureness of a sculptor chiseling marble, he determined to make himself alive to future ages, not through the power of words, but through his power to recreate personality and redirect its aspiration. Jesus was a timeless character compelled to impress himself upon time in terms that should last forever. Having, as he believed, a priceless message to deliver, and only three years in which to deliver it, Jesus was forced to shrewd appraisements and to instant valuations. He therefore weighed the value of language to a nicety, respecting and em-

ploying words just in so far as they had capacity to transmit life, and discarding them just in so far as they had capacity to destroy it. Whether or not he was self-deceived, Jesus habitually spoke and acted in terms of the eternal rather than of the ephemeral. To him all language was but a passing vapor transiently shaped to the movement of man's breath; therefore for the perpetuation of a volume to be open to all men in all eras, he chose to write his history upon the only medium capable of receiving the impress of eternity.

It is possible to read the autobiography of Jesus as we would read the autobiography of any other man, studying in it, one by one, his principles as he himself elucidates them, his portrait as he himself draws it, and his medium of transmission as he himself treats it. Such a study will reveal that those principles are too vital to be learned in any other way than by living them; so long as they are merely discussed they decompose into mere controversy, so long as the Sermon on the Mount is not practiced, it remains only the mocking tinkle from within the grave of a buried hope. Such

a study will show, too, that if Jesus had attempted, as many lesser men have done, to draw his own portrait in the language of his own era, he might have condemned to the effect of a mere death-mask the most living face from out all history. And as one examines Jesus's method of treating that contemporary humanity on which he determined to engrave himself, one may discover that his chosen method of transmission makes both his principles and his portrait as instant in challenge as they were the first time we crucified him. The very fact that the record of Christ's teaching, both the written and the unwritten record, is broken and fallible and inadequate makes each individual's faith dependent upon audacious application, cries to each one of us to swing out into the abyss of the unproven, and ascertain each his own powers, through the most daring adventure known to men, the adventure of creation.

Jesus's Principles

For one who would study Jesus's own account of his life's adventure with the same reverence which one would accord to the self-

revelations of any friend, the subject-matter of his autobiography is seen to be essentially the same as that of any great teacher or doctor. His memoirs consist, that is, of his principles plus himself. The entrance of Jesus into history marks a turning point in the course of human thinking. In three brief years of hurried oral instruction he set humanity a new objective, toward the attainment of which the course of the past twenty centuries is only an incoherent, only a half-convinced, beginning.

Jesus was a physician, a master of mental and spiritual therapy. He has left us a record of typical cases supplemented by as clear an explanation of his technique in dealing with each, as was possible in view of the limited vocabulary available for his use in his own age, and the still limited spiritual perception available for his use in ours. No doctor would, however, be satisfied with the mere relieving of individual cases, but would endeavor to discover the underlying causes of disease and to formulate general rules for cure, for otherwise his skill would die with him and his profession be in no way advanced by his belonging

to it. There is no sin more ostracized than a doctor's keeping his secrets to himself. As an investigator of the human soul, Jesus was too intrepidly curious, and as a teacher of new principles of conduct he was too lucid, to have been content merely with opening blind eyes; he was impelled to enunciate directions for destroying all blindness; he was not content merely to liberate paralyzed limbs, he was impelled to discover means toward a courage that should combat all the paralysis of fear; he was not content merely to call back the dead to activity, he was impelled to prove an hypothesis that would transform death itself from the most depressing to the most energizing force in the world.

Since Jesus was not only a doctor, but a teacher, experimenting with novel theories of the soul's education, his one hope of perpetuating his experiments was to teach other men to teach. In methods of healing and in methods of educating, Jesus was beyond conception audacious, so that, as his own biographer, it was imperative that he elucidate those methods most clearly, lest the cowardice of the men

coming after him should fail to carry his theory and his practice through to what he believed to be their logical conclusion in terms of racial progress.

Jesus left his dusky carpenter shop, barred by the sun shaft from the open door, and in his lithe young manhood went swinging along the narrow walled streets of his little Nazareth, passed between the freshening orange groves, and climbed the nearest mountain to face alone the challenge of his time, challenge from its vast incoherence to his own clarity. He looked down at the twisting caravan routes, and knew from of old their blind and ceaseless movement, past desert and mountain and sea, thirstily on to Rome with arid gold from India, thirstily back to India with arid gold from Rome. He saw the dusty camel boy, the sweating Ethiopian, the contemptuous Roman, the trodden Jew, the crafty Greek, and he saw them all as men shackled. The clear-eyed stripling from little Nazareth needed no scholar's learning to inform him of the past; he read that past from its fetters as he saw them stunting the men and women of the present. Looking back into far-

thest history, Jesus saw the long caravan of humanity come stumbling ever on and on, heavy with its weight of treasure. Then he turned to gaze into man's future. From the height of his fearless solitude he saw. Like Moses, alone upon the mountain, he heard a message delivered to his keeping. Kindled with a burning hope, he went down again from the windy freedom of the heights, passing the orange groves, glistening and fragrant, treading again the tiny streets, entering again the low-walled dusky shop, reassuming his leather apron and his saw, thus awaiting the consummation of his message.

Jesus himself is always the sole authentic revelation of his own convictions. As a physician, he asked people to believe only those rules of health that had made him strong. As a teacher he presented only those theories of education that had made him wise. Since his words, although the most creative ever spoken, are yet the lesser element in his account of himself, his message, because expressed in the luminous terms of his own character, shines forth against all the incoherence of history.

It is possible to disagree about what Jesus said, but never, for honest and humble students of the man in the biography, is it possible to disagree about what Jesus was. Human idealism climbs no higher than Jesus of Nazareth. In him conviction and conduct were so inextricably interwoven that to separate his principles and his personality as subjects for examination is a task almost impossible. No critic would attempt to divide them except to emphasize their mutual illumination. In the difficult effort of analyzing my creed, when I try to define for myself, first the principles and then the personality of the man Jesus, I find myself deducing both from their effect when applied; still more do I deduce both from their effect when not applied. The handwriting of Jesus is starkest on those pages that have resisted its impress.

No one is more sharply conscious than I myself of the apparent effrontery and absurdity of trying to say anything new about Jesus. Once again I repeat that this whole book is written for the sifting of my own faith, and that I make my conclusions public solely with

the aim of perhaps stimulating some few other men to make the same investigation. From babyhood, Christ and Christianity have been familiar words to all of us; it is only lately, in the tragic confusion of all thought and of all purpose which, within the last decade, has blotted out our old familiar world, that I have felt the impulse to discover exactly what Jesus and his teaching mean to me. In what I am about to write, I am trying simply to define those elements in the teaching of Jesus which, from the modest standpoint of my own opinion, have proved, for history at large, powerful enough to rename chronology, and for my own everyday living and thinking have proved vital enough to counteract fear. At best a man's faith must be as hesitant as it is adventurous, a wind-blown candle flame against the engulfing black of chaos. This then, to me, is the message of Jesus written upon history.

Looking back at humanity as it had been, and forward at humanity as it might become, the carpenter of Nazareth conceived the free development of the individual as the primary necessity of all racial advance. How profound

this conviction was for him is shown by his own adventure in personal initiative, the greatest example in history of individual effort against odds. All that circumstances could do to frustrate a man's purpose, they did to Jesus of Nazareth; all that a man can do to frustrate circumstances, Jesus of Nazareth proved. Both his preaching and his conduct are evidence in support of his belief that to raise each individual man to the *n*th degree of his innate resources, would mean a new liberation of movement as momentous as that of the day when the first ape staggered upright. Jesus believed the greatest deterrent to human individuality to be cowardice—cowardice taking a hundred names and forms, but always in last analysis the supreme force toward inertia. To emancipate any man, it would be necessary to give him reassurance profound enough to counteract those primordial fears that are his racial inheritance and personal motive inspiring enough to destroy those intenser fears that are the result of his own bitter experience. Certain convictions and certain practices make for this desideratum of fearlessness, and these Jesus's

own example makes shining clear. It is because of the tendency of all creeds to crystallize into stereotyped phrase, that we have come to look at the theories of Jesus more in their relation to the doctrines of the church than to the doctrines of science. But his theories are dynamic enough to reanimate the doctrines of both. Jesus believed in the exhaustless power of certain truths to stimulate initiative, and these truths he relates always to personal courage, while our own connotation too often loses sight of this emphasis. Not to be cloistered in doctrine, or ritual, but to be incorporated as a means of intrepid growth, did Jesus iterate the themes, eternal life, love of man, love of God. Jesus believed no man could attain personality so long as he was afraid of death, afraid of an enemy, afraid of chaos. Therefore, he taught reverence for life, reverence for enemies, reverence for God, as the three means to make us brave enough to be ourselves.

It may be illuminating to examine these three fundamental principles of Jesus—respect for God, respect for man, respect for life—solely from the angle of the power of each to

liberate development, to combat fear. Jesus perceived that there could be no surer way to self-confidence than to feel that one was at every moment in the presence of a being supremely powerful and yet supremely kind, a being as eager for our growth and our happiness as any human parent. But if a man were to associate with God as freely and fearlessly as a child, Jesus saw that such a God must be fit for man's association. No man would become brave enough to be self-creative through a belief in a deity himself only half-created. "Be ye therefore perfect" would have been a cynical admonition if Jesus had not first predicated that the father in heaven *is* perfect. The God who should reassure men for their own puny adventure in nobility, Jesus saw, must be no erring Zeus, but a God wise enough to satisfy Socrates; no avenging Jehovah, but a God tender enough to satisfy Francis of Assisi. That God who, step by step, accompanied the lonely adventure essayed by Jesus of Nazareth is a God noble enough for any man's companionship.

Jesus, who never compromised with aus-

terity, saw that there was no truer means of attaining courage than by actually loving an unseen deity. He saw that there is no braver man than the one who has sent his own heart out into space calling, "Father." The man who has won for himself the answer to that cry has become invincible to endure all the accidents of human affection. It is because he believes such immunity from the chances and changes of all merely mortal passions and relationships imperative for any individual's free growth, that Jesus makes love—actual, literal love—of an invisible God, the chief of his three fundamentals of emancipation.

Vital words have become so stale with usage that they are often practically moribund, but I am trying to employ the words "love of God" as if they were not a phrase, but a fact. I mean the voluntary convinced attempt to make the presence of God as real in one's daily life as the presence of one's family. It is a practice as difficult to attain as is the fluency of a defective muscle or of some undeveloped mental power. Jesus, however, thought the ability to love an invisible God quite as necessary to our

courageous evolution from matter to spirit as the cultivation of our biceps or of our memories. A habit of companionship with an unseen entity, one that we believe noble beyond the farthest reaches of our aspiration, inevitably gives a man the habit of making spiritual rather than materialist judgments in all things. Jesus beyond all other men believed in our steadfast evolution out of bestiality up to spirituality. Even we ourselves are compelled to surmise the upward tendency of all development when we look first at an amœba, and then at Edith Cavell. Now Christ's doctrine of the non-resistance of evil has always been resisted by Christians, and yet, always supremely consistent with his theories, Jesus believed it enough to die for it. Jesus conceived the law of the soul's growth to be as inexorable as the law of a tree's growth, and he conceived this law of the soul's growth to be always by spiritual, not by physical, methods. It needed no divine wisdom, but mere human wit, to observe that throughout history, never the things of the body, but only the things of the spirit, have endured. In Jesus's day the kingdom of David

was a dead memory, but the psalms of David were alive on men's lips.

Now Jesus not only believed that the progress of all evolution is from the bestial and physical toward the spiritual, but he also believed in our ability to intensify and accelerate this progress. Therefore he felt that whenever, foolishly atavistic and craven, we employed physical means for security or advance, we were doomed to frustrated effort because we were opposing the course of nature, as he himself saw the course of nature. It is perfectly possible to argue that Jesus was entirely mistaken in such reading of the universe, but that he did so read it, seems to me a sound conclusion in the light of the methods he himself employed and the death he himself died. Convinced that no empire could endure except one resting on a purely immaterial foundation, Jesus felt that the very existence of his Kingdom of Heaven depended on men's becoming courageous enough to employ, never physical, but always spiritual, methods for building the structure of their economics and of their government. No man, he felt, would be so well

equipped to distinguish between the permanent and the impermanent elements of reconstruction as the man whom association with God had habituated to spiritual standards.

I offer no argument for or against the practicality of Jesus's philosophy. I am trying merely to emphasize his own emphasis on the creative force of courage. Love your enemies, is a principle that only a fearless man could have expressed either in words or in conduct. All hatred is, obviously, merely cowardice. We hate only those people who have hurt us or can hurt us. Hatred, of course, is of all forms of fear the most natural and deep-seated, harking back to the time when the beast within us moved in water or jungle in dread of its life. There was a time when survival depended on hatred, when safety depended on the fear of an enemy. But it is conceivable, if evolution is indeed the development of the man out of the animal, that a time might arrive when the law of safety for the animal might become the law of destruction for the man. It is conceivable that to revert to the psychology of the beast, in an era when conditions had perhaps

at last become favorable to the psychology of the man, might be to arrest evolution indefinitely. Such would seem to have been the conviction of Jesus when he himself fearlessly adventured new and untested faculties. Jesus dared to love his fellow-man, foe and friend alike. Jesus saw clearly that no man is courageous so long as he wishes to injure anyone. He affirmed the principle, Love each other, because to him, as doctor and teacher, it was an incontrovertible scientific truth that love is the bravest form of self-risk, and hatred the meanest form of self-saving.

For myself, I always see all Jesus's teaching from the aspect of his one all-inclusive purpose; I believe that the supreme reason for his appearance upon earth was to give us courage to create ourselves. With this supreme aim I connect the many themes of his teaching, such as his insistence on the power of spirit over matter, his belief that faith in God is the most splendid adventure open to humanity, and his iteration of the holiness of all life. Of Jesus's three cardinal theses, veneration for God, veneration for one's fellows, veneration for life, it

is the implication of the last that has been most neglected. It is easier for our rudimentary spiritual faculties to dwell on the aspects of death than on the aspects of life, easier to accept and incorporate into our philosophy and behavior all the connotation of the word destruction than all the connotation of the word indestructibility. But Jesus accepted all the stern implications of that worn term, eternal life. Jesus held himself to be indestructible, and since he also held the aim of all God's slow creative processes to be the perfection of personality, it was but logical that he should regard our brief physical existence as only one phase of an endless development toward that perfection. But it cannot be too strongly emphasized that Jesus also believed—what Christians have conspicuously evaded believing—that this physical phase is, for some mysterious reason, worthy of our uttermost reverence, our uttermost investigation of its possibilities.

It is impossible, however, to appreciate Jesus's sanctification of life until one has made forever clear Jesus's attitude toward death. Now Jesus as a man was both supremely piti-

ful and supremely practical. Always before him as his own greatest problem was the finding of a solution for other people's problems. Jesus saw that for life as we live it the most terrifying of all catastrophes is death as we see it. To his thinking, therefore, the fear of death was of all fears the most imperative for a deliverer to annul. This would seem to be the argument deduced from Jesus's actions: if men, to whom death must seem the most absolute of all the facts of existence, could once be made bold enough to deny this seeming, made brave enough to assert against the appearance of dissolution, the reality of survival, then by virtue of the daring engendered by their denial they would transform death from supreme deterrent to supreme incentive. There was nothing, Jesus conceived, that could make faith so absolute as to deny that death is absolute.

The story of Jesus is the story of a man who set himself to disprove death. Whether you regard that story as fact or fiction, you have to admit that the unswerving motive of its drama is the denial of death. The protagonist of that

drama first restored to life on each of three occasions a child, a youth, a man, then, dauntless, himself adventured his own hypothesis. Did he or did he not establish the truth of his great conjecture? For an affirmative answer there is this much to be said: there would never have been any Christian era had it not been for those who have believed that Jesus proved men are greater than death; not one of us would ever have heard the word Christ, had it not been for those who believed that with their own eyes they saw Jesus return, unscathed in character, from the grave.

Understanding Jesus's scorn of death, one begins to understand his reverence for life. There could have been no purpose in freeing earthly existence from the horror of death if earthly existence had not been abundantly worth freeing. There is no explanation of the agony of Gethsemane except that Jesus had a passionate yearning to live. Jesus of Galilee did not wish to die; men killed him. All the splendid capacities of his manhood begged to test the splendid capacities of earth. Jesus never degraded earth to a vale of tears. In-

stead, he bequeathed, as the most precious thing he could leave his friends, his joy in life. While we are still as careless of human life as are the animals, while we defile and trample its possibilities as pigs do pearls, Jesus had attained to a higher plane of vision. To him all physical aspects and activities were sacred, as being the holy vessel of the life principle everywhere abounding. Jesus saw this earth and each man's pregnant sojourn upon it as boundless privilege, for he conceived no nobler invitation to man's powers than that of imposing a spiritual order upon an inchoate universe.

Nowhere have human compromise and evasion so falsified Jesus's teaching as in denying the significance he attached to the words, eternal life. That we continue to be ourselves after death, Jesus taught as an energizing truth, but he drew no raptured post-mundane pictures, because he knew they would be enervating. With divine common sense he saw that to lose ourselves in contemplation of a world to be is irreverence toward this gift of a world that is. We shall never comprehend the meaning of the words, eternal life, until we copy Jesus's

manner of living them. For any man to live as if he thought Jesus meant not earth, but heaven by the words, "I am come to give you life, and to give it more abundantly," is to mock at human dignity.

That each man, and that all humanity, might push unfettered toward their unguessed consummation, Jesus preached to men belief in themselves. It is as if he said, "Once believe that the blind, pushing energy within your being, that the blind, pushing aspiration within the race, is indestructible and divinely implanted, and race and individual will be set free for dauntless growth." How many times did Jesus iterate, "I have come to the world to reveal to you your own indestructibility; I give you eternal life." Always sluggish with inertia, always complacently permitting theology to swathe Jesus in dogma, we have denied ourselves Jesus's gift of eternal life by pushing the conception on into a post-mundane future. But Jesus means not heaven and the hereafter, but earth and now, when he cries to all mankind, "Fling loose of your deadening fears; I charge you to become alive, as I am alive."

Jesus's Portrait of Himself

The portrait of Jesus is a different portrait for every brain that looks at it. For myself, if I had to select the passage best revealing the different aspects in which I visualize the Nazarene, I should choose the sixth chapter of John. Whether the delineation in that chapter be that of a man or of God, it is that of a person as real as the looming shape of a mountain beating on one's vision against a dusty windowpane.

This portrait chapter falls into four scenes. The first glows with the mellow restfulness of sunset. Jesus is seated high on a grassy tableland, with his little group of friends about him. Small time there was to draw deep breath in Jesus's crowded days. The sick, the sick, the sick, dirty and poor, festering, crippled, and malodorous, out of every village people came, dragging, leading, carrying him their sick. And because they saw his healing, people followed him to observe other wonders. He had become a country-wide sensation, feverishly sought, possessively demanded. For a little

while that afternoon, Jesus, a young man, clean-limbed, vigorous, athletic, breathed the wholesome air of the mountain, gazed on the gleaming lake of Gennesaret, there at ease, circled in blessed privacy. Then he looked down, saw the crowd pouring over the plain, relentlessly approaching. His word is instant, homely, practical, "How are we going to feed them?" He asks the question of Philip, that Philip who, even after three years of intimacy, was still to be grossly unaware that he had walked with wonder, that Philip who now fails to guess that Jesus might do for others what he habitually avoided doing for himself or his friends. For himself and for them he refused to turn stones into bread, for the founders of his creed required the stoutest form of faith, that which rests on miracle of spirit, not of matter. Always Jesus's disciples listened to him attentive but bewildered, always they obeyed him, compelled by some strange authority in his lightest tone, but often they obeyed blind and puzzled. There must have been something noteworthy in Jesus's manner of blessing food, his hands must have practiced some sig-

nificant gesture, his voice taken on some mysterious depth, or his friends would not so constantly have mentioned his manner of thanking God for bread, a ritual unnoted by the hungry crowd. The long munching lines are not too engrossed, however, to observe a miracle and to calculate the possibilities of this abundance. A whispered purpose runs like a flame along the lines. The mob, at last sated, surges to its feet, flings aside and tramples the mysterious bread, swarms toward Jesus, intent on forcing him to be their king. What better use for a prophet than to feed them? Five thousand men with one greedy purpose, and against that purpose one man standing, motionless, ironic, that man whom later on men crucified because he insisted on being God not after their pattern, but his own. Again and again Jesus demonstrated his ability to control a mob, to drive them back, as now, like hungry dogs snarling for another onslaught. The words are not recorded with which that afternoon he left the rabble cowed and turned from them to climb, once again, still higher, to solitude.

The second scene is dim with the lonely

shadows of evening, deepening to a midnight terror of mounting waves, and of a looming form that trod upon them. The association of his disciples with Jesus seems always to show that they felt themselves to be moving hourly, step by step, with a mystery, and yet were invincibly aware of a surpassing tenderness that enwrapped them. Jesus, from time to time, uttered enigmatic words that they discussed in whispers; he exhibited strange impulses that they dared not question; he gave strange commands that they dared not disobey. He sometimes went and came mysteriously, but never left them long alone. On this evening, they wait for hours in hope; then, since they are fishermen to whom the water seems friendlier than a lonely beach, they go down to the lakeside and embark for Capernaum. The treacherous lake wind swoops down and their frantic oars lash at the waves. Then a form shapes dim upon the water, a man walking as if on a floor, steadily bearing down upon their tossing boat, and they are wild with fear. Yet it is not the supernatural that is the significant element of the narrative, it is the instancy

with which Jesus, received into the boat, becomes again the human comrade; it is the reassurance of words inevitably true to character, "Mystery that I am, you know me too well to be afraid."

Writing himself throughout all the book of John upon the most veracious page that he found in his three brief years of public activity, the page of a fisher-boy's mind, Jesus devotes the bulk of this sixth chapter not to the passing incident of his walking upon the water, that flickering light on a divinity tranquilly master of waves and storm, nor yet to the supernatural aspects of a feast divinely generous and churlishly eaten; Jesus, writing his own account of the feeding of the five thousand, passes by the mere miracle, to enlarge, in words still quick with the daring that astounded the congregation in the synagogue of Capernaum, upon the significance of his gift of loaves and fish.

There is the glare of hot daylight upon that synagogue scene in Capernaum. Jesus is not speaking now to the mob determined to make him a dictator who should obey their will.

Many of the five thousand must have lingered on in Capernaum, but the subtle, critical disputants whom Jesus now opposes have the character of mocking Pharisees rather than of brute herd leaders. Jesus's words burn with impetuosity; again and again occurs that characteristic phrase of his, which beats through the gospel of John as it must in actuality have beaten like a refrain through Jesus's Aramaic, verily, verily—ἀμην ἀμην. Jesus is always a spendthrift of his powers. He flings a priceless miracle of teaching upon a company as needy and as callous as that other crowd that had munched like animals the loaves sanctified by his hands. Just as those others had trampled his bread, so now derisive enemies pollute his words with their sneering. A passionate spendthrift, that young Galilean Jesus, meeting contempt in every eye in that muttering, taunting synagogue, and still offering his gift, the bread of life held out to them, as he believes, new from the very hands of God. Could any but a man divine have dared to utter words so transcendent to men so contemptuous? Perceiving back of all the arrogance the mortal

hunger and disease, he cries, "Here is my body, eat it! Here is my blood, drink it!"

In all literature there is no passage so stark with contrast between generosity and mockery. There in that little synagogue of Capernaum, once again alone, facing a mob, but a mob of sophists now, a young man stands, with wide-flung arms of quenchless yearning, "You ask of me the bread of death, but I cry to you that the man who dares to believe in me, that the man who dares to become one with my purpose, as food becomes one with the body, the man who dares to fuse his being with mine, as drink becomes fused with the blood, that man shall have within him life even as I, standing before you on this new day, have within me life." And against that burning appeal, "Behold, I offer you myself," only the wagging of crafty turbans, only the laughter of all the mockers: "What is the madman babbling? That we should eat his flesh? Is he staging some magician's trick of pouring his blood into a cup and offering it about for drink? Why is this upstart ranting that he comes with a gift from

God, when we all know him the carpenter's son yonder there in Nazareth?"

A last scene as vivid and as searching as if the walls of the room where each of us is at this moment sitting should drop, and show us again, as at the first, Jesus with his circling company of twelve. But now the group is shadowy in the darkness of the evening that presses upon the faint embers of their little fire. But now there is no endless crowd coming with its menacing gift of popularity. Instead the long roads are heavy with the feet of those who have turned back from a teaching too stern and from a man too disconcerting. The man who alone of men dared to say, "I am life," now sits brooding upon this spurning of his gift. Whether one rejects Jesus or accepts him, there is surely one thought no one can escape—Jesus of Galilee must have been the loneliest man that ever lived. We who read his biography are crass if we suppose he experienced only one Calvary. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" We think it the loneliest word ever cried by humanity into the black mystery of space. It is no lone-

lier than that earlier cry to his own twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Did any man ever try to inscribe himself on more unlikely material than Jesus chose? The fact that the sixth chapter of John exists is proof that he was justified in his choice, yet the closing words are also proof that no man ever fought so hard for his faith in men. Of all the human words that a most human Jesus ever uttered, there are none that ring more veracious than those, "Did I not myself select you as my twelve friends, and yet even among you one of you is a mocker?"

Jesus's Method

For twenty centuries Jesus has been struggling to make his principles and his portrait plain to men, but we ourselves have condemned them to obscurity, not so much because we do not accept them as because we refuse Jesus's own method of revealing them. Every great teacher or doctor who has ever tried to transmit to the future his own theories and his own personality has also tried to explain his own method of applying his theories. Jesus lays

down certain laws as indispensable to all his experiments in healing and in educating, but we shall never read his message accurately until we imitate his own courage in basing it on no authority whatsoever except the authority of its application. Jesus's method is as commonplace—that is, as true to everyday experience—as it is creative. Perceiving the innermost mechanism of the human intellect, Jesus, the psychologist, enunciated the innermost mechanism of his practice. He spoke with authority and not as the scribes when he declared that conviction is not conviction unless it has become action, and that action is not action, but mere motion, unless it springs from conviction. This is not theological dogma, but plain scientific law utilized by every alienist in every hour of his work. Whatever any man's philosophy, whether pagan, materialist, or Christian, so long as he keeps that philosophy separate from his deeds, the man remains uncoordinated, incapable of development.

According to the argument of Jesus, you cannot have this necessary interplay of conviction and action without constant recourse to

hypothesis—that is, without constantly making trial of that which you believe, but have not proved. But acting on an hypothesis is only another word for faith, that underlying method of all evolution which Jesus merely carries logically on to its spiritual application. Faith, whether scientific or spiritual, is the ascent, step by step, from one hypothesis to another, as if one built a firm staircase out into chaos, but to Jesus, the supremely courageous, the adventure of the spirit out into space, climbing by hypothesis after hypothesis, up to God, is the supremely emancipating exercise for the development of each man's personality.

The logic of Jesus's method lies in his embodiment of it. It is that embodiment which alone renders plausible the astounding rule that he laid down as the supreme rule of his technique. If one honestly tries to divest one's mind of all obscuring associations, all phrases that have become pitifully stereotyped, and to look at Jesus as a live person standing there in the window's light, it seems indeed an amazing dictum for any man to have pronounced, for Jesus declared that the only way to know

his principles or his personality was by an inexorable intimacy with himself. To practice association with some one twenty centuries dead is an incredible demand, yet it is a demand that we Christians have sung about and prayed about ever since we were big enough to sing or to speak, but perhaps if we had ever obeyed it, the Christian era might long since have become Christian.

Long ago in the little synagogue of Capernaum, Jesus, in language ablaze with Oriental imagery, invited the contemptuous scholars, the dogmatic clerics, the ambitious demagogues, the thick-witted fishermen, to an intimacy with himself as absolute as it is liberalizing, as blind as it is illuminating, as humbling as it is educative. But at the mere thought of accepting Jesus's terms of our emancipation to be ourselves, how our lips curl and how clear still sounds the age-old laughter of that little synagogue beside the glittering lake! To walk hourly with the most enigmatic character in human history—this is a hard saying, who can accept it? There is no man of us who cannot hear his own voice joining the mockery of

priest and scholar, of demagogue and laborer. Only a madman could have dreamed of writing his creed of life upon so motley a throng. Yet still there cries to the lonely soul of each one of us from the far off, night-dimmed lake shore of Galilee that loneliness of a man who asks only to give himself, "Will ye also go away?" Yet, still, as we plod the long, black roads that lead far from Gennesaret, there flashes across our brains at times the strange conjecture: What might happen to the world's progress if one man in every ten thousand should dare to obey Jesus's command to association? And across the blindness of our way there sometimes flames another question: Why, among all the teachers who, throughout the world's slow history, have said, "Come unto God," did Jesus alone say, "Come unto me?"

The Medium on Which Jesus Wrote

As I scrutinize the influence of Jesus upon history, that handwriting blotted and erased and spat upon, it sometimes seems to me that it is not so much the theories that he taught, and even not so much the life that he lived, as

it is his treatment of his chosen medium of transmission that best reveals in his autobiography Jesus the man. It is Jesus's faith in humanity that most convinces my own faith of his divinity. Only a creator could have exhibited such confidence in his creation as to intrust all revelation of himself to the mere chance that here and there throughout the blind and scattered years some few men might recognize and follow him. The words of Jesus have come down to us only because every man has been left free to remember or forget them; the personality of Jesus has come down to us only because every man has been left free to reflect his character or to spurn it. More vital for a vital faith than any written Bible could ever be is the witness of Jesus's relation to history. Step by step as I build my creed, I observe Jesus's attitude, first, toward humanity at large, then toward the humanity of his own era, and last toward his personal associates in all eras. This handwriting of Jesus in terms of his effect must be studied by every creed-builder with equal regard to its acceptance and to its rejection. Pilate reveals Jesus as clearly

as does Peter. The Pharisee reveals him as clearly as does the publican. The World War is the most practical argument history has ever declared for the establishment of Jesus's impractical Kingdom of Heaven. If by some strange chance Jesus should be God, then perhaps it is with a creator's reverence for his own creation that he leaves every man who meets him free to become either a Judas or a John.

The actual manner in which Jesus chose to inject himself into human history is for my own mind an evidence of a superhuman respect for human nature. His first requirement of himself as teacher and doctor was a lifetime of study. It needed no divine insight, but only common wisdom to perceive that enmity would never permit such thought as was shaping within him to have more than the briefest public hearing, and yet Jesus held himself rigidly to thirty years of silent observation before he presumed to instruct or to heal any man. Jesus compelled himself to be a carpenter before he dared to be a Christ. No achievement which humanity had reached before he came to clarify all further aspiration did this Christ despise.

The Galilean learned to curb within himself all his native impetuosity before he learned to curb a mob. Slowly, patiently, he shared the slow patience of the earlier Jewish prophets, who only gradually came to the realization of their mission, before he went forth, the greatest prophet of them all. In the solitude of the hills, alone with God, far more alone in the solitude of an uncomprehending village and an uncomprehending family, Jesus had acquired the courage to be himself before he asked any man to be fearless in carving his own personality. Jesus humbled himself enough to walk reverently with every man before he asked any man to walk reverently with God. Jesus's life thus shows him as equipped for his task of revelation to us of ourselves, not only by a creator's knowledge of our capacities, but also by an everyday man's everyday association with other men throughout thirty patient and utterly human years. During those thirty years, the best that his neighbors learned of him was negative, that this man committed no sin; but the best that Jesus learned of his neighbors was positive, that all men were capable of unlimited

good. Jesus always respected others more than they respected him. The essence of his teaching is that he believes in a man's power to create himself, while the man still doubts Jesus's power to recreate him. The two potentialities are as closely related as a sheet of paper is to the hand that writes upon it—without the paper the hand would be impotent; without the hand the paper would be blank. Every power that men possessed before he came to elucidate all their powers, Jesus respected and utilized. As his kingdom is only the fulfillment of the best inherent in the old kingdom of David, so Jesus himself condescends to be merely the embodiment of the best inherent in men. It is this aspect which he chooses as the first step toward an intimacy, the terms of which can only be deciphered as day by day and word by word we learn a new alphabet of friendship.

Jesus's attitude toward our evolution differs from ours because he has boundless confidence in our power to accelerate it. His cures were instant because he convinced men that they had within them reserves of strength instantly re-

sponsive to his touch. "The poor have the gospel preached to them"—in other words, he preached to the people belief in themselves. Believing ourselves sluggish, we remain bestial. Believing ourselves cruel, we remain weak. It is sentimental to trust one's fellows. It is manly to doubt them. Yet there was one man brave enough to die for his faith in men, and brave enough to trust them to bring him back from death. Courageous enough to die for a world that laughed at his kindness, courageous enough to return to a world that still laughs at it, Jesus has succeeded in writing here and there, on this soul or on that, some lines of his own personality.

It is impossible to observe Jesus's respect for the material on which he wrote without the stirring within that material itself of a new self-respect. What are we that he should have trusted himself to us with such divine abandon? Whether or not he was mistaken, Jesus saw humanity as blind and groping, but alive with promise. Jesus, physician and teacher, gazed into his own Peter and John, gazed into Roman and Pharisee, Greek and Phœnician, into all

those flesh-and-blood men immediate to his touch, then looked further down into Briton and Russian and French, into Italian and American, all the oncoming caravan of nations spreading like a page for his writing, and weighed the capacities of each for receiving his imprint, for it needed something liver than dust to retain the tracery of his finger, dead dust upon a pavement—forever trodden by worshipers too self-absorbed to stoop to read the handwriting of Jesus the wanderer, pausing for a few hours' teaching in a temple's outer court. Only spirit was substance plastic enough to retain the imprint of Jesus. It is true that other men than he have, like him, inscribed their lives upon other men, but no one of them ever treated this living sheet with the reverence and the sympathy with which Jesus treated it. More than a sculptor loves the marble that imprisons his statue of a god, Jesus of Nazareth loved his Philip and his Nathaniel. Because, above all other men before or since, he desired for himself self-expression, he understood the deathless yearning of every soul for freedom to be itself. Jesus had experienced

the agony of great impulses denied their outlet. The substance on which he chose to write was the most receptive he could have found, for his twelve were of the same flesh and blood as himself.

Looking forth at all the universe groping blind and dark toward light, from it Jesus chose humanity as the only page ready for his inscribing; looking at all the strange, dark seethe of history, from it Jesus chose for his own contemporary setting that place and that date which, to any other observer, would have appeared, of all places and dates, the least promising; and out of that era of lost causes and dead hopes he chose, as recipients of his message to all time, only twelve men, eleven unlettered rustics from his own vigorous Galilee, and one other, from hypocrite Judea.

Jesus never compromised with the contemporary, and never despised it. His trust in humanity is nowhere more conspicuous than in his manner of compelling to his own purpose the petty, contemptuous, bigoted humanity of his own period. Across the Palestine of his day, his influence runs blazing clear, illumi-

nating the faces and the motives of the people who resented his presence. Three men crucified Jesus—the priest, the politician, and the man in the street. Each of these three sought to impose his own authority upon Jesus, and, failing to accomplish this, out of fear for that authority, killed him. There can be no God but our God, said the priest; there can be no king but Cæsar, said Pilate; there can be no nation but our nation, said the man in the street. They were men of the past, those three, but Jesus was the man of the future. It was nothing to them in their panic that Jesus treated them and their past with a sublime consideration, for nothing in the past that was alive did Jesus ever destroy, and no man that dared to be himself did Jesus ever scorn. In his treatment of the contemporary, he sought to inform it with its full capacities, both of inheritance and of promise, condescending to use current speech, but chiming his utterance with eternity. If one compresses his recorded conversations and discussions and sermons, it is as if he said to the churchman, keep your ancient God; to Pilate, keep your ancient king;

to the mob, keep your ancient nation; but that you and they do not die, let me inform them with new vigor, for I come not to destroy but to fulfill. Jesus obeyed law and custom, worshiped in synagogue and temple, sanctioned tribute paid to Rome, satisfied the desire of the mob when they were hungry. He was never negative, never destructive. He did not deny any wisdom that tradition had written upon his contemporary setting; he merely tried to write that wisdom in terms of new inspiration. Over and over again the gospel narratives reiterate his emphasis, recording him as saying, "Pharisee, it is true that you have God to your father, but prove it by your sonship; vicegerent of empire, it is true that men must be governed, but governed not by force, but by conviction; patriot, it is true that your nation is unique among nations, but the greatness of any nation that endures is the greatness of a servant." Twenty centuries ago, these ideas of Jesus were novel and dangerous. Twenty centuries ago, his propaganda was a menace to religion and government and nation, for he said to the moribund, "Let me give you enduring life."

By what they refused to accept, the character of his contemporaries and the character of Jesus are blazoned clear upon the manuscript of humanity. They were afraid, those three men of old Jerusalem, and so, for their own preservation from death, they crucified their Nazarene. To-day, where is that Jerusalem's church, where is that Jerusalem's government, where is that Jerusalem's nation?

In that little group of twelve whom Jesus chose to be his immediate pupils, there was no Pharisee, no Roman, no demagogue, but constantly, as would be true of any group of twelve men chosen in any time or place, the minds of Jesus's associates are seen to be influenced by the philosophy of the Pharisee and the Roman and the demagogue. Both within and without, the apostles were beset with difficulties from which Jesus was always patiently trying to free them. Whether we consider Jesus as God or as man, all of us would surely admit that he was a teacher who thought his theories worth his scaffold. The actual methods and the actual men this teacher selected as best fitted for the promulgation of new doctrine

are worth anyone's studying merely for their effectiveness. One does not have to be religious in order to open the New Testament and discover how Jesus treated his pupils, and what type of pupils he chose.

Twelve men, of whom one was false, but not for this reason any less a witness to truth, changed the history of the world. These men were without money, without education, without experience, without prestige. Looked at as the gospels reveal them, they appear to be the most unlikely material ever chosen to be the missionaries of any cause. Their names have been raised to a dignity that has made their memories into shrines, but the truth is that if any of us had been living in the Palestine of Jesus, we should have considered Peter and James and John, Andrew and Thomas, too poor, too ignorant, too provincial, too uncouth, for notice. Least of all should we have dreamed that any man would be mad enough to intrust to their hands a purpose precious enough to die for. Looking back at the disciples of Jesus, we make one great mistake: we attribute to each an innate, rather than an

acquired, nobility, whereas not one of them exhibits any force of character until after association with Jesus. And, a fact to be profoundly noted in its relation to the men of to-day and to the Jesus of to-day, this change of character does not occur until after the physical presence of their master has been removed; not until faith in the unseen has become their daily practice do the apostles reveal the courage of men recreated. Whatever we modern men may think of him, it is impossible, if we read the gospels with any scholarly candor, to see the disciples as inviting anyone's attention until Jesus has made men of them. If Jesus had not seen something in them, we should never have heard of them. And no less is it true that if they had not seen something in Jesus, we should never have heard of him.

Jesus had no time to be anything but unerring in his choice of material, for always people were as determined to give him death as he was to give them life, death by sneers until it should at last become death upon a cross. Forced to treat his own contemporary in such a way that it should hold his impress

forever, the Nazarene carpenter rejected all those death elements that rejected him and ventured his whole preservation upon those elements he believed to be permanent. Twelve men only, and all of them Jews, and all of them commanded to preach only to Jews. Jesus worked with units, not with aggregates. The smaller his audience, the more he was himself. He never spoke more eloquently than when alone with Nicodemus, alone with the Samaritan woman at the well curb. His method with a pupil was to inscribe himself from within out. He wrote on some one individual heart some one individual word, and left it there like a flaming seed, and always the person he chose was an impossible person, and the word he chose an impossible word. On Peter, the unstable, he wrote Rock; on John, so cruel that he would have summoned fire to consume an enemy, he wrote Love. Jesus's faith in his power to create personality was obviously an impossible faith, and yet the chapter of his influence that Peter embodied is still entitled Rock, and John's entitled Love. Jesus reckoned power in terms of personality; we reckon

it in numbers. We commute our advance in strings of ciphers. The churches count their converts by the hundreds, the armies count their slain enemies by the thousands. The first thing that strikes the mind in Jesus's choice of his promulgators is that he chose so few. Yet perhaps the reason modern progress is so hazy and abortive is that we move always under the hallucination of numbers, and have become so accustomed to handling dollars that we fancy souls are also subject to computation.

Possibly the marvelous rapidity of Jesus's progress across the page of pagan thought is due to his using a shrewder psychology than do we. Jesus, compressed as he was into a petty contemporary setting, and knowing that his failure to transmit himself meant the failure of his new kingdom before it was even begun, either took no chances, because he dealt with a certainty, or he took all chances—and won! But, at any rate, the method of transmission that he risked was that of intensifying rather than of multiplying. He convinced a few men utterly, that was all. He convinced a few men that he was deathless and that they

were. He offered no other argument than these men in proof of his thesis that he had come to give life to the world.

Dearer to Jesus than the blood in his veins was the establishment of an ideal commonwealth which, against the dark seethe of chaos, should ever in its growing structure embody the clarity and stability of the ordered purposes of God. This was the dream Jesus died for and yet he risked its very existence on his faith in men. Mad and mistaken he may well have been, but he apparently believed that if individual men could be lifted each to his fullest capacities, there would necessarily arise a commonwealth as stable and as vigorous as a mounting vine. Deducing Jesus's theory of government from his three years' conduct, such would seem to have been his process of reasoning. Therefore, he did not try to make his "Kingdom of the Heavens," he merely tried to make men. To him the argument was irrefutable, that if men failed to make his kingdom, then he had failed to make them men.

Only twelve men chosen to transmit to all time Jesus's theories of human growth and of

human government. It is illuminating to examine in these men precisely what qualities Jesus considered best fitted for the promulgation of a transcendent message. These twelve men were all poor, and of his little group Jesus himself was the poorest. Strange that we moderns dwell so little on the possible profundity of Jesus's motive in choosing to be a poor man. The spread of Christianity is a satiric refutation of our popular argument that it requires money to publish truth. Jesus intrusted himself no more to money than he did to numbers. Jesus's chosen missionaries were day laborers, villagers, men who had worked with their hands as Jesus himself had done. Poor men, for they had to be brave men, not men constantly afraid of losing possessions with which they felt their very identity to be incorporated. Men who knew they would be themselves without a penny in their purses, would be men ready to accept Jesus's command, "Provide no gold, nor even silver nor copper to carry in your pockets; no bag for your journey, nor change of linen nor shoes." Thus free of handicap, such men would be constantly reinforced

through putting God to the proof. Jesus had his reasons for choosing laboring men to lay the foundations of a Christian structure, for men accustomed to the inexorable realities of wood and sailcloth and net would be themselves the strongest witness to the reality of a dream. Sturdy fishermen do not drop oar and seine without a conviction worth any man's examining. Tragically pressed for time as he was, Jesus had to make swift, infallible judgments in finding missionaries equipped to preach his theories. Poor men could best exemplify the interrelation of creed and conduct, for they cannot indulge in any mental luxuries, they cannot afford to hold theories they do not practice. Selecting them from out the stumbling onward caravan march of humanity, Jesus had to have men who did not carry a crippling pack of materialism on their backs, that pitiful weight of treasure from the past, but men who would press forward to spiritual adventure, fearless in their naked strength.

Jesus chose ignorant, but not witless, men as the heralds of his new commonwealth. Among the Jewish intellectuals of his day

learning was an idol worshiped, an idol unrelated to everyday suffering and everyday enigmas, but in Galilee this was not so. There men still reverenced wisdom, and sought it where the Jewish prophets had found it, in study of the desert and of the sea and of the seething lives of commonplace people. Of all the Jews of their day, the Galileans were those least crippled by servility toward the erudition of the scribes and Pharisees. The learned priests come to argue subtleties of doctrine with Jesus, but it is astonishing to observe how little the humble-minded friends of Jesus seem to have been concerned with the doctrinal disputes, either of the Pharisees or of modern theology. They seem to be dominated by a personality so beautiful that they forget dogmas. "To whom else shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," shows how quickly a sturdy Galilean realist perceived the authenticity of the message Jesus was trying to write upon time. No dense wall of intellectual pride hid Jesus from his rustic followers as it hid him from the proud scholars of Jerusalem. The men on whom he left his indelible handwriting were

men not illiterate, but yet incapable of all literary achievement. Their lack of imagination and appreciation as one reads about them is as dumfounding as it is convincing. All of them were powerless to invent what they had not seen; in fact, they seem almost powerless to describe what they did see. However we try to explain away Jesus, to attribute his existence to the literary invention of his disciples, is a laughable evasion of evidence, an evasion of which in any other subject but religion, any intellectual among us would be ashamed. Jesus, in that inscrutable wisdom of his, forestalled the doubts of the modern and subtle when he selected to transmit him, men who were incapable of inventing him. The men who were the first to give Jesus to the world had these advantages: they were Orientals, with that singular training in verbal memory that is still exhibited in the training of Mohammedan boys to-day; and they were Jews, and as Jews endowed with that gift of a unique spiritual perception which in its highest manifestation has attained to the leadership of the world's emergent idealism. And yet, except as the contagion

of Jesus's words and presence quickened their sluggish intellects, his associates were dullards. It is necessary for a student to take into account the ignorance not only of his immediate disciples, but also of the whole period that he selected for his entrance into history. It was a period which, as I have earlier shown, had no knowledge of chronology. It would be hard to find anywhere to-day a ten-year-old child with as little sense of historical perspective as even the most learned rabbi of Jesus's day. This absence of all perception of chronology actually gave the companions of Jesus a superior advantage—unhampered by concepts of time they could readily describe a timeless character. Because they are not trying to give sequence, they can the better paint spirit. The gospel portrait is the direct effect on simple receptive minds of actual association with a man who himself thought and moved freely in terms of eternity.

The companions of Jesus were without worldly experience, grossly provincial. They had experience, of course, of the profundities of life and death and all the blind mysteries of

everyday living, love and ambition and effort and disillusion, but they were utterly untouched by the effete civilization of ancient Rome. Their shrewd sense of realities penetrated all its flimsy posing, all the pomp of its decay. Those rustics who were to become the apostles of a clean, new, spiritual era were men able to detect beneath the perfume of Roman culture the stench of bestiality. They were, therefore, men far enough advanced in evolutional development to appreciate the stark spirituality of such a psychological truth as, whosoever looketh after a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Jesus, wishing above all other things, to teach the dignity of man, had to select as teachers men who were no respecters of persons. Those Galilean fisher-folk had no prestige of their own, and no respect for it in others. They were not netted in social distinctions. The old aristocrat crept to Jesus by night, but Peter and James and John had no caste to lose in coming to him by day. Judas is the only one of the twelve who cringes before the priests

and struts before the constabulary. The apostles were not men debilitated by having power over their fellows, power which it is always a temptation to abuse. They were not coerced by possessing authority over others, for authority, social or governmental or military or ecclesiastical or intellectual, must always be remembered and lived up to, for fear one may lose it. The apostles were the possessors of their own souls, therefore could more freely yield those souls to this new rustic rabbi. Unweakened by the possession of power themselves, these Galileans were, at the same time, so little servile to the power of the current government, religion, law, and science that they readily accepted the authority of a new leadership. The church of Jerusalem had no strangle hold on the sturdy Judaism of Galilee, therefore the Galileans could receive the teaching of an excommunicated man. As independent as they were humble, the Galilean fishermen sacrificed no social position when they associated hourly with an outcast. Jesus could recreate his twelve, all but one, because they were men who could recognize him.

Poor men they were, the twelve, and ignorant and provincial and obscure, and such they might have remained forever, instead of having become the almoners to all humanity of its greatest riches, its deepest wisdom, its widest vision, its noblest power. One of these men speaks of his own transfiguration, Peter addressing Mark:

"But when you write this you can say
'A certain young man,' leaving out your name,
You may not wish to have it known 'twas you
Who ran away, as I would like to hide
How I fell into sleep and failed to watch
And afterwards declared I knew him not:
But as for me, omit no thing. The world
Will gain by seeing me rise out of weakness
To strength, and out of fear to boldness. Time
Has wrought his wonders in me, I am rock." [1]

Twelve men Jesus selected to preserve his words, to draw his portrait. One of these, through slow years of invisible companionship, he transfigured into that page of all human pages most receptive to his imprint. And yet the supreme testimony of the twelve friends of

[1] The Gospel of Mark, Edgar Lee Masters.

Jesus is not to his words and not to his portrait. It is rather that, being men as actual and as human as you or I, they stand to all time as testimony to Jesus's power to recreate.

Three Men Who Knew Jesus

I

There were only twelve apostles, but there might have been another, the only man whom the gospels record as able to resist that magnetic, "Follow me." Only three men is Jesus described as "loving"—Lazarus, John, and this one other, for whom, as he looked into his face, he is said to have felt all a lonely man's sudden yearning affection. Forth from that long blind march of humanity that daily streamed past Jesus's searching eyes, as he plodded unheeded by the roadside, there flashes one day a radiant figure. Rich, learned, cultured, illustrious, a young man comes running to fall on his knees before the dusty wayside preacher. "Master of all goodness," he cries, "what must I do to possess the secret of this strange new life you teach?"

They are possibly just of an age, those two who gaze into each other's eyes with mutual longing, the poor man and the rich.

"Surely you know all the ancient rules of goodness—why is it that you come to me for more?"

"I have kept them all, unsatisfied. Tell me the living secret that shines in you."

"Have you the courage to walk naked of riches and learning and ease and fame, alone with me in this my adventure?"

Decision swinging in the balance, momentous. Before Jesus a man equipped beyond all other men he met to understand him and to blazon his message to a groping world. We do not know that young man's name, but had he accepted the emancipation at that moment offered him, it might have become the name of a leader second only to Jesus himself in advancing human freedom.

The moment passed. The young man turned back from his soul, standing before him in its naked beauty, eager for its strange new path. The young ruler walked away, heavily, shrunken to the measure of his fetters. Per-

haps Jesus was only a man; if so, he must have been the most enfranchising friend any other man could have possessed. Perhaps Jesus was God, briefly tenting in human flesh; if so, one man, a coward, refused his companionship in that short earth-sojourn, because, so the old narrative tells, he was shackled to his money.

II

All the world was loser when the rich young man refused his freedom, for all the world can see his transcendent fitness to be a page for Jesus's inscribing, but to the end of time no one will understand why Jesus chose Judas one of his twelve. How lightly we all scorn Judas, Judas who scorned Jesus just as lightly as we do! In all the gospels there is no man whom we know so little, and no man whom we condemn so quickly. We see in him only a mocker and a cynic, reverencing neither God nor man, without enough respect for human nature to reverence his own self, a petty soul shriveled to the size of his own convictions of human bestiality. Judas had no barriers of personal idealism to protect him from the logic

of his own conclusions. If money is power, why not steal it? If priest and Roman have sway over our comfort, why not be a sycophant? If love is merely an animal instinct, why not betray with a kiss? Judas's attitude toward Jesus is derision, irritation. He studies Jesus in order to know how best to get rid of him as a popular hero. Mary's adoration is to him superstition; her broken alabaster box disgusts him. He flings away from the scene, straight to the priests, for this upstart teacher who occasions such a waste of people's money and emotion is a menace. Yet perhaps the only difference between Judas, the mocker, and John, the apostle, is that John was capable of believing a man could be a god, and Judas was incapable of believing a man could be anything but an animal.

Such is the Judas that we see, but possibly it was not the Judas that Jesus saw. In all literature there is no friendship on record so incomprehensible as Jesus's choice of Judas. Is it the work of a fool tossing gems to swine, or of a God possessing the leisure of all eternity for his perfecting of each man's creation?

Is it witness of one whose destiny was to share every human experience, even failure? Was it that he might undergo every form of human torture in order forever to still our cowardly lips of their complaints that Jesus spoke all his teaching gazing into Judas's little ugly ferret eyes of derision? Of all the men Jesus met, Judas was the most hostile, yet back of the mocking contempt did Judas's master perhaps perceive Judas a lonely man, and hungry? What strange possibility did Jesus divine that like the grain of an unconquerable seed planted in him, was powerful enough to cause his remorse? If Judas had been only the Judas that we see, he would have been no more sorry for Jesus's death than were Pilate and the priests and the mob. The most obstinate page that Jesus ever found for his inscribing, and yet, what of the witness to Jesus in that crash of silver coins flung upon the pavement, in that crash of a body flung upon the stones?

III

In that far-off past, one man lived capable of perceiving the Jesus of to-day. The su-

preme foundation for my faith is the gospel of John. I believe that in that gospel God wrote himself upon a man's soul in imperishable terms which will become clearer as, century by century, the spiritual perception of the race grows clearer. I do not believe that any man has ever lived who could have invented the gospel of John. Ineffable words imply an ineffable speaker; a transcendent portrait implies a transcendent original. All denials of the authenticity of John's book seem to me quaint. Materialists substitute for its writer a highly developed ape, rationalizing his instinct for self-preservation into a religion. Christians who think that they have rejected the gospel of John seem to me even quainter, for that book is woven into the fiber of every Christian. No man who has read the fourteenth chapter of John is ever the same man afterward; however he may deny his growth, that chapter has sown in his soul an invincible seed. Once having read the fourth gospel, you cannot by any reach of effort escape reading the other three in its light. However much the intellect may deny the evidence, the spirit

yields itself utterly to the Jesus of John, just as once a Galilean fisherman yielded himself to his friend, the carpenter.

John's utter fusion with his friend's beauty was not accomplished in three brief years of sight and touch. John's book is the testimony of a man who had not only spoken with the actual Jesus, but who afterward through seventy long years or more had lived him. John was an old man, visioned by the testing of his faith, who lived on into a day of doubt and question. Of all the evangels, his is the most vital for to-day. Of all four, it is the Jesus of John who stands forth as imperishably divine. Yet it is with an inspired foreknowledge of our present, that John establishes that divinity on no miracle but that of character. John reveals a flesh-and-blood Christ; his account has the small, momentous evidences of the eye-witness. The Jesus of John is a most human man; he has tricks of speech, of vocabulary, of gesture, of manner, a plain man's burning oratory and denunciation, a villager's shrewd and sunny humor, a friendly man's sudden wistful appeal for friendship, and yet, with all his

homely intimacy with his friends, he has flashes of a mysterious aloofness and of a mysterious communion with unseen powers. Jesus's incarnation would have been a sorry travesty if he, taking flesh, had remained an abstraction. The Jesus that John knew was the most highly individualized individual who ever existed. He was the most personal person who ever lived. Therefore, too alive to swathe himself in mere words, his transmission was dependent on his power to win devotion from his friends.

John was a human man whose character possessed unique capacities for reflecting the character of a friend. An impulsive young Galilean, dauntless for adventure, dropping everything to follow through the streets a man whose passing face had mastered him; ignorant, yet deeply learned in the most spiritual literature the world has yet produced; inexperienced, but capable of reading all humanity's experience in the all-pitying eyes of the carpenter of Galilee; obscure, but capable of a vision wide as the reaches of earth and heaven. Yet until Jesus touched him, only a fisher-boy squatting over his net on the beach. John is the greatest

example earth has offered of what Jesus can do to a man. Jesus came to earth, and Judas laughed at him, and in Judas we are all forever shamed. We should remember that when the Creator for a little while inhabited flesh, he found one page made beautiful for his writing; we should remember that one man of us had attained that power of love which fitted him to be the biographer of God.

The Continuation of the Autobiography

"There is nothing new in the teaching of Jesus," so all of us have at some time argued, at moments when we were feeling too proud to associate with anyone so commonplace as the carpenter-Christ. "There have been prophets before him, and prophets since; there have been idealists in every place and among every race. Other men than Jesus have proclaimed, So should men act; other men than Jesus have announced, Such is God. What is there in the principles or the person of this Jesus that makes his autobiography above that of all other men, worth studying?" Perhaps there is nothing new in Jesus's teaching, noth-

ing new in Jesus himself. After countless centuries of gardening science and gardening experiment, there comes into existence a certain fruit; there is nothing new about that fruit except its perfection. After ages of patient creation there comes into history a certain man; there is nothing new about that man except that he is perfect. Here and there against the dark course of twenty centuries there has appeared a flaming handwriting. Here and there against dark soil there has gleamed the green flame of a living bush, but on the whole, the teaching of Jesus remains new because it has been denied experiment. Here and there along black, bewildered streets have passed shining men and women whose kindled faces bore witness that they had seen the risen Christ, but on the whole, Jesus remains new because he has been denied resurrection. In the dark, haunted archives of human history, sinister with questioning, the autobiography of Jesus, golden with promise, is a book as yet hardly begun.

Chapter VIII: Creation Versus Chaos

THERE runs throughout the world to-day an undercurrent of strange expectancy. We cannot say whether this expectancy is made up of hope or of terror. We all feel it as mystery. Beneath an outward security, surmised as transient and superficial, we are each of us conscious of momentous forces stirring in the darkness. The shell shock of the last decade has left us still palsied and apprehensive. We are divided into the many that huddle back to the old pre-war defenses, and the brave adventurous few that cannot visualize safety where bombs may fall and again raze our house walls and expose our souls like gutted ruins to the pitiless wind and sun and rain. Impelled by the smoldering devastation behind them, there are those who would rather become pioneers of

some untracked forest or barren coast. We hardly know which way to turn from danger, back or forward. There are moments when we would barter our souls for a clear decision or for a confident leader.

Sometimes it is as if each one of us, alone, in a black mist, heard all about him the crashing of a battle, not perceiving which side to follow, yet knowing that his very life depends on following the one or the other. Sometimes it appears as if the powers that move forward and the powers that turn back had once again met for a combat as absolute as in the old story of Michael and Lucifer. Before 1914 we flattered ourselves that there was a wide middle ground between the two armies, where we might cultivate, each his own tiny field in the sunshine and each of us go cozily bustling about his own little affairs. But all that pleasant middle ground is to-day wiped out by a blackness in which unseen hosts are heard advancing. Who are they? What are they? Not to join is to be trampled, and yet which ranks may one dare to join?

It makes small difference that this confusion

is of thought only, that externally our daily lives are running on for a while with the smoothness of their previous momentum. It is perhaps this very concentration of our thought processes that is in itself troublous. To-day no one can escape thinking. Somehow the strange cosmic stir has got inside of our brains and, to our dismay, drives them on and on relentlessly to solve problems, to impose some sort of order, no matter what, each man upon his own private chaos. Yet in all this there is hope. Chaos is that which has not yet submitted to the laws of creation, and thus chaos may be either cosmic or merely the seething turmoil of each man's intellect. Yet in either aspect, when chaos has once become conscious that it *is* chaos, it has become ready for creation. Perhaps this curious suspense that throughout the world at present stays so much of needed public action and of needed private initiative is that once again, as long ago, all chaos waits, dark and breathless, for a Voice to say, "Let there be light."

Yet perhaps to-day that Voice itself is waiting for our own voices to speak those words,

now when once again a black universe trembles forward toward dawn. Do we yet value our birthright of groping? Looking within ourselves at the blind march of our thoughts, looking beyond ourselves at the blind march of humanity, do we never take delight in climbing up and away from the little pressing humdrum activities of our days, to meet, each son of God among us, the challenge of chaos to our own soul? Finite and human and mistaken as may be any man's solution of this world in which he finds himself briefly placed, may not each humblest individual effort toward clarity strengthen by just so much the power of the whole race for its creation? Which of us to-day is too drowsy to be conscious of the far, deep stir of mysterious forces in this familiar earth? Once long ago a garden, in the blackness that preceeds dawn, lay in hushed expectancy, and in that breathlessness each tiniest seed grew aware of the mounting rumble of an earthquake that should roll away a stone from before a tomb.

It matters little with what mergent pictures we visualize our present confusion, familiar

refuges smoldering behind us and unattempted wilderness before; or a black night trampled by plunging armies; or the brink of the world again waiting as millions of years ago, for its own emergence; or an endless, wistful caravan driven forever on from out a mysterious past into a mysterious future; all the pictures give the same impression, that of some solemn choice before which we stand in a suspense not much longer to be endured. We cannot define this feeling in the air all about us, but in some strange way we know that each man of us, each nation of us, must presently move in one direction or the other, irrevocably.

Any man who would wrest from all this disorder his own creed must examine not effects and events, but the mentality back of those effects, testing it in the light of his own convictions to see whether it is a mentality set for progress or for retardation. Throughout this book I have maintained that for me the clue to the universe is the personality of Jesus, so that my analysis of present-day chaos becomes merely an expansion of that belief. Jesus's character is the only argument Jesus himself

ever made for his divinity. It is in the light of his perfection that I examine what to me is an evolution too marvelous to be accidental; if not accidental, then at every moment of its many million years, divinely ordered. All our present anarchy is, to my own mind, due to our blind resistance of the laws of our creation. As a summary of all that I have tried to say, I state that I have come to regard those laws as three, and to believe that for any nation or individual to transgress any one of them, means not only suffering but disintegration. Some degree of order, however humble, has begun to be imposed upon chaos as soon as any man has made his guesses at the laws of progress. When he has proceeded a step farther, and set himself intrepidly to obey those surmised laws, he has consecrated himself one tiny factor in racial advance. There is a patriotism of time as well as of country; every man owes this era the courage of his own convictions.

It is a period when not to think for oneself is perilous, and when not to act for oneself in choosing one of the two momentous roads before us is even more perilous. In an age when

all authority has become obscured, we do not yet appreciate our high opportunity for individual adventure. To what man now prominent in business or government or literature or religion do people look with whole-hearted confidence? To-day while the superficial authority of our economics, of the state, of philosophy, of the churches, still holds, the real authority that comes only from the spiritual acquiescence of the governed is gone. Of this fact business and politics and literature and religion are all aware and betray their apprehension in an hysterical insistence on all the externalities of the old compliance. This apprehension and insistence are quite unnecessary, for the external structure of our living is exactly that which is not in the least jeopardized by the new yeasty processes that are leavening our thoughts. Where there are always extremists who believe an external upheaval will mean a spiritual reformation, to-day the great majority are too sane and too observant to trust any such absurd premise. We are all of us thinking, as individuals, more deeply than we have ever thought before, but precisely in order that this strange

new activity within us may have opportunity for parturition, we would preserve all the security of outward institutions. We desire freedom to think quietly just because we do not desire to act hastily. Yet it is quite true that authority, in the old sense, as a real power in the world, has passed away, but there is steadily coming into existence a new authority, and at this very hour, wherever any individual in the ranks of business, government, literature, or religion avails himself of the new standard of measurement, he is accorded a popular support, which is still as little generally perceived and employed as some hidden mountain torrent. Any man anywhere could become a great leader today if he should base his leadership, fearlessly, in word and deed, upon this new torrential force. For one form of leadership an expectant world is ready.

Before a world that waits for our decision, humanity has reached that stage in its evolution when it stands free to accept or to refuse its further creation. If we refuse, we shall still be forced through slow centuries of blood and pain to submit to the Creator's will that we

rise to our destined stature. It is at this moment within the power of every man, of every country, and of all the race, to obey the laws of evolution and to advance, or to disobey them, and thus indefinitely to retard our ascent. At this hour, our Creator has permitted us at last clearly to co-operate in our own perfecting. With more reverence for his creature than his creature has for him, he offers us our choice, and like all the world, he, too, stands waiting.

To me, one humble adventurer of the unseen, these are the three laws of our development. Evolution starts with nothingness, within which stirs a mysterious seed of life, pushing steadfastly up and up throughout all the fathomless patience of 1,600,000,000 years, first from the mere flicker of light upon water, ever on through myriad forms, on from the one-celled amœba, on to the animal constantly more highly differentiated, no two individuals among plants or birds or reptiles ever alike, ever on and on to the highest aspect that we know, the infinite variety of human character. The perfection of personality would seem to be the primary law of evolution. If we obey that law, all

the structure of our society should be adjusted to it. While each individual should be provided with the stability of custom and tradition, within which he may advance personally secure, all organization should be arranged with the free play of individuality as its fundamental aim. Industry should be frankly motived not merely to make money, but to make men. Just in so far as we cripple initiative, we cripple the race. Not the easy manipulation of masses, but the responsibility of the state to the individual should be the purpose of any government humble enough and aspirant enough to try to share the Creator's method of creating a nation.

It was Jesus's practice to work not by any incoherent mass-production of ideals, not by any form of widely syndicated influence, but by the energizing of individuals and of small units, and using these as a dynamic leaven of the whole. Observing what Jesus was able to accomplish by means of twelve men recreated, we perceive one never-to-be-forgotten fact. While the perfecting of personality is a basic principle of evolution, personality is never an

end, but a means. Any man that tries to be merely himself, shrinks. Jesus transformed twelve timid slaves of circumstance into kings of their own souls, in order that they might lay the foundation of his kingdom of earth. The Creator would by his inexorable law create us men that we may become ourselves creators, equipped to transform all chaos into a structure fit for our own innate divinity.

The second law is the corollary of the first, the law of leadership. The race moves forward not by any form of herd-adventure, not by any mass movement from the rear of the caravan, not by any driving force of instincts from our fear-haunted past. Demagogues who exploit those herd-impulses like a goad, cause merely a terrorized stampede. The race advances not by means of those who lash us from the rear, but by means of brave individual adventurers who press on, alone, into the black mist before them, and cry back courage to the ranks behind. Individual men and women, bold explorers of the unproved, have always been the luminous salients that pierce for the rest of us the darkness of chaos. Slowly, with growing

courage, the hesitant mass has followed, until it came abreast of its captains. The commonwealth of the future will seek to provide conditions that permit the emergence of generalship. And yet perhaps to-day, in our dark bewilderment, the conditions were never more favorable for the making of leaders, but we demand of them a new test of fitness, a test that as yet neither we nor they recognize with sufficient clearness.

The third law of evolution is the law of its direction, invincibly upward. At the one end the brute, at the other, surely the man, and perhaps the god. Each man, each nation, now stands gazing at the parting of the roads, one leading back toward the animal, the other on toward the man. If we revert to bestial cowardice, even so, it will not be forever. Our animal security will prove a false dependence, and we shall be forced from it upward, to our destiny. But how much worthier of our manhood that, convinced, not compelled, we should at once accept the adventure now offered us! Those two armies that we seem to hear struggling in the darkness, are actual enough, the

one comprising all agencies, which, by basing every action public and private on animal motives, would turn us back, and the other, that host which resents being stampeded by the brute instincts of cowardice and hatred, and demands new captains brave enough to penetrate the untried future. Steadily, under the sure hand of the Creator, we have risen from out the primal slime until we possess upright bodies, and intellects matched to an endless quest. Knitted always into our development, rudimentary at first, and quaint in its guesses at its own nature and at the nature of God, there was growing in us a still nobler endowment. Along with the fluency of our muscles and the daring of our brains, there was steadfastly evolving the beauty of our souls. Any creed that does not include in its data the mystery of human beauty and of human aspiration, and is at least reverent before the enigma of origin that they present, is not only superficial but fanatic, and, in its effect on conduct, retrogressive. In so far as Freudianism explains our animal instincts, it emancipates us through self-knowledge; but in so far as it justifies

those instincts, it helps to perpetuate them. Shall we to-day believe that we are animals, no more responsible than a lizard adapting itself to the sunshine on a wall, or—a theory a trifle more rational—shall we believe that we are machines of a fathomless intricacy, which is entirely due to accident, or shall we believe that we are men capable of rising to the full stature of the soul's aspiration? The alternative before us to-day is to use or to refuse our spiritual faculties. The capacities of the soul are incalculable, but untested. The choice is as clear as it is momentous: do we prefer to spend all our seventy years cringing with hatred or bold with service? New faculties demand our faith in them, lest they atrophy and poison our being with decay. The world waits each man's choice; fear, or adventure, which?

Of the two forces that to-day struggle for control, the sinister one is the better organized, the more articulate, the more outwardly effective, since it possesses all the advantages of custom and habit, all the obsolete defenses once needed by the savage in his jungle, but it is a force doomed, because it resists the inexorable

tendencies of human development. It frightens personal initiative, it pits the impulses of the crowd against the idealism of leaders, and it seeks its ends by purely materialist methods, in a day when all civilization has become dependent on the use of spiritual standards. Whatever noble guises the power of retrogression wears for its own confidence, it is a dangerous power, because it is blind. In a mad panic of self-protection, it fails to see that there is nothing in the world that requires so much of sheer intelligence as does safety.

All this sounds like mere abstraction, but it is the kind of abstraction that any man can apply to his own newspaper this very morning and to his own conduct this very day. With one or the other of the two opposing powers locked in struggle, every man or woman of us must enlist, fearlessly and without compromise. Of the two armies, the one that faces forward is immeasurably the stronger, but it is as yet lacking in coherence, and in vision, and in certainty of aim. The rising tide against materialism is torrential, but uncontrolled. It rests with each one of us to give it effective-

ness. We shall accomplish this just in so far as we intrepidly deny ourselves the methods in use by the opposition. The idealism that eight years ago rose to the flood has never really disappeared. It only needs clear motives for its present direction. Our side will win, because our side goes with and not against the course of nature. But how soon our side shall conquer, and how completely, depends as never before in all time on each individual man and woman. On the strength of each one's personal convictions, on the bravery of each one's personal actions, depends all further course of human progress. Have we the courage to follow the upward road, reverencing to the uttermost the law of initiative, the law of leadership, the law of spiritual standards?

Just in so far as in one smallest degree any one of us falls back on the outworn methods that mean retrogression, we shall fail. We must fearlessly reject every appeal that is based on any form of fear, for all fear chains us to the jungle. In sober practicality we must assert the standards of the soul and refuse to

measure our stature by our power to destroy life, to injure an enemy, or to make money. If we believe that humanity has a soul, we must prove it or join the army that denies it. Either we possess spiritual faculties or we do not. The only way to discover is to use them.

In all the general bewilderment, however, it is difficult for the individual always to know in which direction he is facing, back toward the smoldering ruin, or on toward the hidden future. There is one infallible test. There is a power abroad in the world to-day with which the forces of retrogression do not yet fully reckon and in which the forces of progress do not yet fully trust. For two thousand years there has been tracing upon history a persistent handwriting, for two thousand years there has been slowly rising a persistent influence. All thinkers to-day must reckon with a resurrection, remembering that it was a resurrection which once conquered Rome. No longer swathed in dogma, no longer bound in ritual, no longer circumscribed to any creed, but a living man, never was Jesus of Nazareth so mighty in influence as he is in this hour.

Once again Jesus has escaped all entombment, so that to-day there is no one who does not know him by sight. More and more, therefore, are we coming to test all motives and activities by his opinion. All of us, then, who would assist in humanity's creation, have only to look up from every dilemma into the sane and steadfast eyes of the Nazarene. Two thousand years have not passed in vain, for whether we wish it or not the personality of the carpenter has now become the criterion of all conduct. Each of us who would go forward unhesitant, needs only boldly to assert that criterion. Jesus has made himself so familiar to all of us that there is no one who does not know the instant answer to the question, what would Jesus do? There has become one sole measure for leadership. Any man who could convince us that he followed no mere lip creed, but the real person of Jesus of Galilee, could lead us anywhere, for, however appearances may obscure the fact, there is to-day but one accepted Leader.

What do we hear Jesus saying? What do we see Jesus doing? That is the sole argument

with which to meet the specious reasoning of those who would drag us with them back to the animal. How would Jesus vote on child labor? What would he do in regard to the food prepared for market by the day-long toil of hands six years old, two years old? What would he say about flogging? Can you see him wielding the lash? What would be his opinion of the solitary cell? Would he have helped the Herrin miners shoot the scabs? Would he have helped the mine-owners to evict their tenants? Can you see him raining bombs from the sky? Can you watch him inventing a poison gas? Would Jesus have waited until the Germans invaded Belgium, or dealing as he always did, not with conduct, but with the mentality back of conduct, would Jesus have stopped the World War where it began, in the German primary schools, where in child minds the love of country, that holiest emotion, next to the love of God, known to man, was polluted and turned from beautiful service to friend-nations into ugly fear of bugaboo foes?

Is there one man who does not know Jesus's answer to these questions? And more than

that, how many silent thousands of us agree absolutely with Jesus's answer! Then why do we not ourselves speak that same answer boldly? Only, as each of us knows, because we are afraid! Yet if even for one day we should each raise his voice, asserting Jesus's reply to any public question, what an invincible array we should even overnight become! It would not need thousands. Suppose one hundred men, each standing for one moment of the day alone with God, and saying, "Reveal to me how I to-day may help to build the commonwealth of Christ," what might the consecrated energy of one hundred men accomplish! We do not in the least realize our present advantage, for the world is waiting breathless for those who might direct its idealism. Everywhere chaos awaits its creation at our hands. It would not need a hundred men. Because the seed they planted has been growing for a score of centuries, we have an advantage the first twelve planters of a new faith did not have, so that if to-day any twelve men should go forth, each alone, but convinced of an invisible Comrade trudging alongside, any twelve

men might accomplish for the twentieth century what the apostles accomplished for the first. Or conceive that from the ranks of intellect and learning there should rise up one man as convinced of Jesus's resurrection as was Paul of Tarsus, what light might come to all the dark paths of earth from the blazing oratory of that one man!

Why are we afraid to assume our creatorship? It cannot be that we prefer chaos, that sinister jungle of beast-fears and beast-hates, that blackness from which we have but just emerged, with the dawn light on our foreheads. Surely we know ourselves indestructible. For two reasons I believe myself eternal. Jesus is either nothing, or he is in all ways the supreme example. I have no concern with what manner of body Jesus returned from the grave, but that his character survived death is reason for my belief that my own character is like his, eternal. Further, I cannot believe that evolution would devote incalculable millions of years to the perfecting of personality, only to annihilate it in a moment. Individuality is a phenomenon so impressive that I believe the Crea-

tor has a use for it after death as before. As I look at evolution, it is matter in process of turning into spirit, and spirit is indestructible. If, then, we are immortal, cannot we lean for a little while from out our eternity, giving full-hearted attention to the quest of earth? Who knows how beautiful may be this gift of physical existence intrusted to each of us—this beautiful thing named life—like a rough gem, in order that each man's own hands may shape it in accordance with each man's own faith? We are permitted to bring to our work of creation all the vision, all the joyousness, all the unhurried security of those who, themselves eternal, build for eternity.

And for our task of imposing order upon chaos, we have leadership that needs only each one's following, each one's embodying. Throughout the course of human thought, it can be seen that whenever any man has denied the existence of God, he has instantly felt the obligation to make a god to replace the one he had cast down. There are many such gods to-day, but they all show the same blurred resemblance to one ideal, except a few that,

starkly consistent, show the image of the savage. All the many god-shapes, however, that are made with courage reveal that nobler likeness to a face that we have all seen, and can never afterward forget, because it is the face of that man of all men most alive. For creating ourselves in the image of God, we have a luminous example. Humanity advances by means of adventurous leaders, shining salients that penetrate the darkness before us. Always from time to time, one man and then another, will accept that challenge of chaos to leadership, and at his call of assurance we, the hesitant majority, will follow until we come abreast of him. Yet there is one man we shall forever follow but never reach. One man there was who, granted for a little while the privilege of earth's chaos, went so far in the lonely adventure of faith, that he has forever established the uttermost reach of human aspiration.

A Creed

I BELIEVE in a Creator and a creation, two distinct and separate facts. I believe that Creator to be personal, but his personality to transcend explanation in terms of my own. I believe that creation to be an evolutional world, and that the laws of evolution it is possible for us, looking back, to ascertain, and looking forward to prophesy. I believe that at one actual historic date, and as one consummate revelation out of many lesser ones, before and since, the Creator chose himself to enter into his creation, submitting to every law that he himself had established. I believe that by himself assuming human flesh, the Creator revealed to humanity for all time its goal. I believe that as the Creator chose voluntarily to be an example, he allowed his creatures voluntarily to accept or reject that example, then as now.

So far as I possess capacity to fathom the motives of his incarnation, I believe them to have been: illumination, that we might understand the laws of our destiny; justice, that we might never again complain that we are left blind and helpless in a bewildering and perilous universe; and a yearning desire that in allowing us to share our own creation, he himself might have companionship in effort. That we might never reproach him for unfairness, he chose to accept the utmost handicap of his own laws, he chose to be a member of a despised nation and of its humblest town, to grow to self-knowledge through all the slow processes of an unlettered intellect, to speak the most transcendent message on earth to men dull and helpless and obscure, to intrust its transmission to mere word of mouth that should later be written on a few brief pages, themselves subject to all the misapprehension inherent in human words. Above all, he chose to be the least understood man who ever lived, and to be of all human benefactors the one most foully rewarded. Thus the Creator might say, "To

which one of you have I assigned such handicap as that I assumed? I conquered, so may you."

I believe it is possible for any man's faith to roll away all the obscurity that has condemned the God-man to oblivion, and to set free a living Comrade whose actuality is proved by the power of his presence to enfranchise from all fear, and the power of his personality to create personality in others. I believe that the incarnate Creator was an actual man, living, breathing, historic, and that his name was Jesus.

THE END

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